

# THE INDEPENDENT



Wednesday 24 September 1997 45p No 3,410

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## TODAY'S NEWS

### Historic Ulster clash was mild as celery

Ulster Unionists sat across the negotiating table from Sinn Féin yesterday in a meeting billed as a historic encounter: it was the first time the official Unionists had faced hard-line republicans for three-quarters of a century. In the event, it turned out to be low-key and subdued. The Unionists launched a prepared attack on Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, calling for their expulsion from the talks. However, one of the non-combatants at the private Stormont session described the verbal assault as like "being beaten with a stick of celery". Page 3

### Extra university funds

By paying out students' loans in three instalments next year, the Government succeeded in generating an extra £165m for universities next year - money that it hopes will be used to improve poorer students' prospects of going to college. Page 8

### Christian exodus

In a special report, Robert Fisk finds that, 2,000 years after the birth of Christ, Christians are fleeing their Middle East homelands, under the pressures of war and an increasingly militant Islam. Page 7

### SEEN & HEARD

The producers of *EastEnders* were forced to apologise to the Irish yesterday after an episode of the soap, set in Dublin, portrayed many characters as drunken ignorant bores. More than 150 people rang the BBC to complain and the Irish embassy took up the cudgels on behalf of its people following the "stereotyped and prejudiced" episode. The Irish Tourist Board weighed in saying it was concerned at "the negative image of Irish hospitality" indicated by the soap. The programme showed a drunken man pour beer over one character, and then demand payment for the drink. Also in the cast was a rude, unfriendly hotelier, several surly relatives of Pauline Fowler and resentful, unwelcoming bar customers.

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the Eye, page 9

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Photomontage: Mark Hayman

Royal prerogative: The fates of Deborah Parry (left) and Lucille McLaughlin now rest with King Fahd

British nurses Deborah Parry and Lucille McLaughlin were last night facing reported sentences of death and 500 lashes respectively, following the murder of a fellow nurse in Saudi Arabia. But, according to Jojo Moyes, frantic diplomatic efforts are likely to prevent a humanitarian and diplomatic crisis.

Last night the nurses slept in the Central Prison in Dammam, Saudi Arabia, apparently unaware of an unfolding diplomatic furore over reports that one had been sentenced to death, the other to 500 lashes and eight years in prison.

Lucille McLaughlin's sentence, for "offences related" to the death of Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford, was confirmed yesterday by her lawyers, who were told of it at a hearing in El Khor and immediately lodged an appeal.

The Foreign Office was yesterday struggling to confirm the fate of Deborah Parry, also charged with Ms Gilford's murder, after lawyers representing Ms Gilford's family issued a statement saying that she had been sentenced to death by beheading.

Defendant Deborah Parry has been found guilty of intentional murder punishable by death and defendant Lucille McLaughlin has been found guilty of related offences and sentenced to flogging and eight years in prison," said the Saudi-based International Law Firm.

Confusion followed. The Foreign Office and her lawyers in Saudi Arabia, Salah al-Hejailan, stressed that no verdict had been reached in respect of Ms Parry. But Mr Hejailan said that the victim's brother had agreed not to press for the death penalty.

"A settlement has been signed with (Frank) Gilford to waive the death penalty. It is signed and done and witnessed and authenticated," he said. According to Sharia law, Mr Gilford can instead accept some form of reparation.

The Saudi ambassador to Britain, Ghazi Alqasibi, reiterated this. "If this agreement is finalised, and I understand it is, then there will be no question of the death penalty being imposed at any point of the proceedings," he told Sky News.

But in Britain, reaction to the women's reported fate was swift and unhappy. Foreign Secretary Robin Cook said he was "deeply concerned" by the severity of McLaughlin's sentence. "That is wholly unacceptable in a modern world. Nobody should be asked to put up with anything approaching that kind of physical punishment," he said, adding that he would be redoubling his efforts on the case.

The plight of the two nurses has captured the world's attention, prompting an unusual level of diplomatic activity. Less visible yesterday was diplomatic outrage at the news that between 85 and 200 men, women and children were massacred in Algeria, including those attempting to rescue the booby-trapped bodies of the others.

According to Amnesty International, there have been between 120 and 200 floggings in Saudi Arabia so far this year. Floggings take place publicly or behind prison walls, and are carried out using a metre-long bamboo cane. In more severe sentences, lashes may be "staggered": one woman sentenced to 200 lashes last year received them in batches of 50 separated by a few days to allow her wounds to heal.

If this were applied to Ms McLaughlin, her sentence could be carried out over a period of months, or even years.

### INSIDE

Robert Fisk asks: What is the House of Saud really after?

Jojo Moyes describes the Muslim challenge to the Western perception of Sharia cruelty

Rupert Cornwell points out that while the fate of the two nurses grips the British press, Islamic fundamentalists slaughtered scores of women and children in Algeria.

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This year 107 people have been beheaded for murder, rape and drugs smuggling in the kingdom.

Diplomats and lawyers stressed yesterday that neither of the nurses was likely to receive the full reported sentence. But Britain and Saudi Arabia are now under heavy pressure to find a diplomatic solution acceptable to both sides. This is not surprising given the trade relationship between the two countries. Last year, visible exports from the UK, one quarter of them arms, totalled £2.5bn, while imports, mainly oil, totalled around £752m.

Both governments are apparently keen to avoid a repeat of the four-month diplomatic stand-off that took place following the television screening of the film *Death of a Princess*. This depicted the public beheading of a 19-year-old princess from the Saudi royal family who admitted committing adultery with a commoner.

The two British nurses were arrested on charges of murdering their colleague Ms Gilford in December at the hospital complex in eastern Saudi Arabia where they worked.

Ms Gilford was found stabbed 13 times, bludgeoned and suffocated in her room at the King Fahd military medical complex in Dahrana on 11 December. Ms Parry, 38, and Ms McLaughlin, 31, were charged with her murder the same month.

Yesterday's development came as an appeals court in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, was still reviewing the case as part of a lengthy mandatory appeals process. The procedure would involve a decision by yet another court and Saudi King Fahd. There was no word from Saudi authorities on the case.

But the parents of, and British lawyers for, Ms McLaughlin and Ms Parry said yesterday it was difficult to understand what had happened. They were "surprised and shocked" that the court had upheld a conviction based on confessions which were later withdrawn.

"Not one shred of evidence against either nurse has been heard in court. They have not had a trial, we just find it absolutely unbelievable," said Stan McLaughlin, Lucille's father. He added that he expected the women would only hear of the verdict on the BBC World Service on a radio in their cell. "That says everything about the system we are up against," he added.

## King Fahd's dilemma: Islamic justice versus Western values

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Tony Blair might himself have to make a pilgrimage to the land of the two Islamic holy places and show as much concern for the two peoples' nurses as he did for the people's late princess, writes Robert Fisk.

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From Syria to Egypt, from Lebanon to Israel, Christians of the Middle East are being squeezed out of the lands which have formed the cradle of their faith.

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New satellite pictures of the Earth give a unique insight into global vegetation patterns, and how these and the plants within them keep the planet alive.

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Jonathan Aitken is following in Jeffrey Archer's footsteps, turning from politics to fiction. His new novel is believed to be about a public figure brought down by the envy and cynicism of lesser mortals.

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Many white people in South Africa feel that the country's government is trampling unnecessarily on sensibilities by removing statues and renaming streets, but, for many blacks, the pace of post-apartheid change is not fast enough.

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Tiger Woods makes his début in the Ryder Cup – and he has the perfect temperament for it.

### TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.16	Italy (lira)	2,735.00
Austria (schillings)	19.60	Japan (yen)	193.19
Belgium (francs)	57.62	Malta (lira)	0.61
Canada (\$)	2.17	Netherlands (guilders)	3.14
Cyprus (pounds)	0.82	Norway (kroner)	11.39
Denmark (kroner)	10.68	Portugal (escudos)	281.67
France (francs)	9.37	Spain (pesetas)	234.43
Germany (marks)	2.80	Sweden (kroner)	12.02
Greece (drachmae)	443.69	Switzerland (francs)	2.30
Hong Kong (\$)	12.07	Turkey (lira)	26,352.00
Ireland (pounds)	1.06	USA (\$)	1.57

Source: Thomas Cook

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## PEOPLE



Cherie Booth with Ms Phelps outside the High Court after the hearing. Photograph: Reuters

### Dyslexic successfully sues education authority

Pamela Phelps, a dyslexic, brought hope to hundreds of fellow sufferers yesterday when she successfully sued her former education authority for failing to spot the condition.

In a landmark judgment, the High Court awarded £45,650 damages to Ms Phelps after hearing how she had been condemned to a life of "temporary mental tasks" because of her "inadequate" education.

The ruling is likely to open the way for hundreds of dyslexics preparing similar legal claims against their schools and local education authorities.

Ms Phelps' solicitor, Jack Rabinowicz, whose firm is handling 50 such cases, said: "Many children have been badly let down and this case will mean they can now go ahead to claim compensation." He added: "Pamela hopes that her success will mean that other children will not have to go through the trauma that she had, and that there will be... better appreciation of the needs of special-needs children."

Later, David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, warned the ruling could have "devastating" implications for

schools. "It implies that schools are going to be at much greater risk of claims for damages," he said.

In his judgment, Mr Justice Garland ruled that Hillingdon Borough Council was liable for breaches of duty of care by educational psychologist Diane Melling who failed to diagnose that Pamela was dyslexic in 1985. Miss Melling "erred" in attributing her learning difficulties to emotional problems.

Ms Phelps went to Hayes Park Infants School in 1978 and was referred for the first time to an educational specialist at the end of 1980. She was not seen by an educational psychologist until she moved to Mellow Lane Comprehensive School in 1985. Cherie Booth QC, who represented Pamela at the hearing in July, said the condition was only spotted when her family saw a television programme on the subject and arranged for her to have tests.

After yesterday's decision Ms Phelps, from Hayes End, Middlesex, said she would use the money for special tuition and hoped to take GCSEs eventually so she could become "rich and famous".

— Michael Streeter



### Pavarotti and Verdi prove to be the ultimate duet as concerts sell out

Tickets to hear Luciano Pavarotti singing Verdi's *Requiem* with the Philharmonia in the Royal Festival Hall in December sold out in two hours.

It is the first time that the South Bank Centre in London has welcomed both Pavarotti and his fellow tenor, Plácido Domingo, to the hall. In the past, the centre has talked more of expanding pop and rock music, but the 1997-1998 season focuses on the six resident orchestras, ranging from the London Philharmonic to the Alban Berg Quartet. The Philharmonia season until next March is already

65 per cent sold. Such sales go some way to confirming the claim of Nicholas Snowman, the centre's artistic director, that attendances at classical concerts are, marginally, on the increase.

Other highlights on the South Bank this winter include Nigel Kennedy playing Elgar, Sir Simon Rattle conducting the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the Royal Ballet, featuring Darcey Bussell, Viviana Durante and Leanne Benjamin, with *Tales of Beatrix Potter* and *Peter and the Wolf*.

— Clare Garner

### Hopkins's Hannibal voted baddest baddie ever

Hannibal Lecter is the most evil movie character ever, according to a top 100 of film bad guys.

The cannibal with a taste for Chianti, memorably portrayed by Anthony Hopkins in *Silence of the Lambs*, is top baddie in the list prepared by *Total Film* magazine. It follows last month's selection of Harrison Ford as the top film actor of all time in an *Empire* magazine poll.

Behind Dr Lecter in *Total Film* magazine is Henry, played by Michael Rooker in *Portrait of a Serial Killer*, John Doe as portrayed by Kevin Spacey in *Seven*, Joe Pesci's Tommy DeVito in *Goodfellas* and Frank Booth from *Blue Velvet*, one of a

long line of Dennis Hopper baddies. *Blue Velvet* is the only pre-1990 film in the top five, supporting the theory that film baddies get worse.

There are only seven evil women in the top 100, topped at number 15 by the Kathy Bates character from *Misery*, the role that won her an Oscar.

• Vinnie Jones, the Wimbledon footballer with a mean reputation, told *Total Film* his favourite Disney film was *Jungle Book*, mainly because of his Baloo the bear. "He was the best dresser in the whole jungle, and he was a good bloke who always looked after his mates."

— Jeremy Lawrence

## UPDATE

### HEALTH

#### Early-death warning for the obese

One in five adults risks an early death because of obesity, an expert warned yesterday. But many of those at risk are unlikely to be helped because doctors and patients are not on the same wavelength.

Professor Tony Winder, of the Royal Free Hospital in Hampstead, London, claims that while doctors and other health workers are concerned about the health risks associated with obesity, such as stroke, heart disease, diabetes and osteoarthritis, patients are more worried about the low self-esteem which often comes with being fat and the possible loss of their social lives.

"We all know that fat people eat more than they need, although that may still not seem much," he said. "The question is – what are we going to do about it and who is going to take the lead? First we have to get the patients and health people on the same wavelength, then to establish team systems for working with patients on their problems." The subject of how obesity should be treated was to be debated at the hospital yesterday.

### CRIME

#### Judiciary reluctant to tackle racism

Government plans to force judges to hand out tougher sentences to people convicted of racially motivated crimes have received a boost from new evidence showing that the judiciary is reluctant to take on racism.

A study conducted by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) shows that judges only use their discretionary power to add time to sentences, where racism has been a motive, in 20 per cent of cases.

The paper shows that between April 1996 and March 1997 the CPS identified 937 cases of harassment or violence where the perpetrator was acting partially or wholly out of racist bigotry. But in only 181 of those cases did judges indicate that the sentence was increased as a result of this information.

The figures will add weight to the case for tougher sentences for racially motivated crimes to become obligatory. Government proposals, which are expected to form part of Home Secretary Jack Straw's Crime and Disorder Bill, will be published within weeks.

— Paul George

### TRANSPORT

#### Japan's trains take track record



There may be faster ways of travelling, but not on railway tracks. Japan's *shinkansen* bullet trains are now officially the fastest passenger carriages in the world, according to a global survey by *Railway Gazette*.

The 120-mile stretch from Hiroshima to Kokura takes only 44 minutes as Japanese travellers are, propelled at more than 160mph on the *shinkansen*. The French TGV, for 15 years the world's speediest service, races along at a little more than 158mph from Lille to Paris.

Eurostar manages to claim third place, on its journey from Paris to Mous, where it clocks more than 130mph. Britain's fastest railway, Great North Eastern, takes sixth spot with its 190-mile trip from London to York which runs at an average speed of 112 mph. However, this title may soon slip away from the east-coast service. Chris Jackson, deputy editor of *Railway Gazette*, pointed out that Richard Branson's Virgin group had ordered trains that will run at 160 mph. "They are talking about it, but Virgin's West Coast service needs to upgrade a lot of track first," he said.

— Randeep Ramesh

### INSURANCE

#### Private medicine loses its appeal

The lure of private medicine has lost its lustre, according to the latest figures. Despite the booming economy, the better-off are refusing to use their wealth to pay for medical insurance that guarantees them privacy, a choice of menu and a chat with the consultant when they are ill.

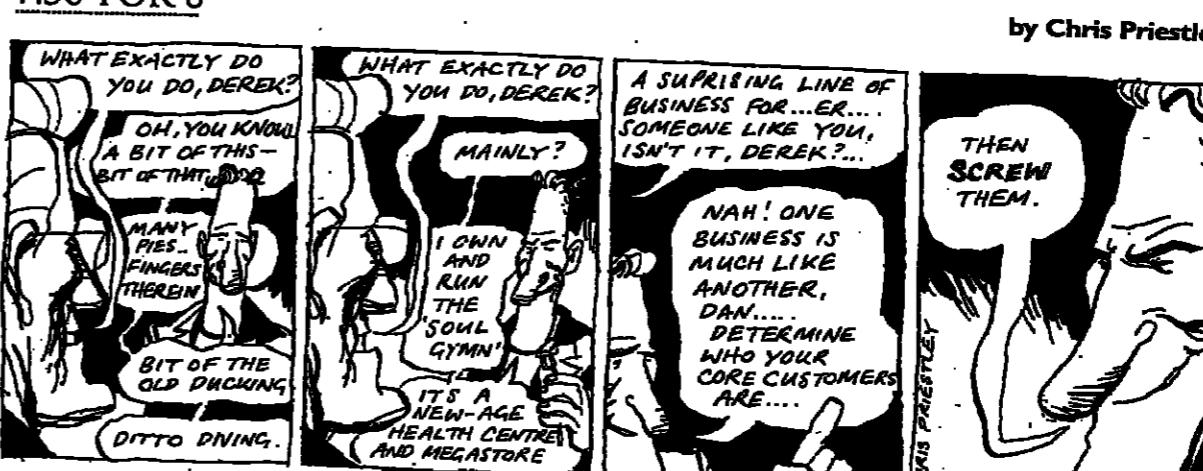
The number of people covered by private medical insurance, at almost 6.4 million, is lower than it was six years ago, at the start of the recession, according to *Laing's Review of Private Health Care 1997*, published today. Although the drop of 200,000 since 1990 is attributed to a change in the way the figures are counted, the report says that "no significant volume growth has taken place" over the past six years.

A key reason is the sharp rise in premiums, up 7.4 per cent last year and up 58 per cent since 1990 to an average £53 per subscriber in 1996. People who have private cover are using it more and appear to be keeping new subscribers out of the market by driving up premiums.

— Jeremy Lawrence

by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

7.30 FOR 8



by Chris Priestley

## SWIFTCALL

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## Moment of history turns into a damp squib

The Ulster Unionist Party and Sinn Fein yesterday met face to face for the first time in the multi-party talks at Stormont in Belfast. David McKittrick, Ireland Correspondent, suggests that they resulted in something closer to a whimper than a bang.

After an unexpectedly short and low-key encounter, the British and Irish governments will now attempt to end the procedural trench warfare and propel the talks into real negotiations by Monday of next week.

This is to be done by the introduction of a procedural motion, the terms of which were being worked on overnight, which would effectively herald the start of real negotiations.

Yesterday's session was described as historic in that it brought Ulster Unionist and republican leaders together in the same room for the first time in generations. Next week promises to be even more significant if the two sides begin to do business, even if only at a distance.

The Unionist party brought forward an indictment against Sinn Fein, seeking to have the republicans expelled from Stormont. This took the form of a 30-minute attack by the party's security spokesman, Ken Maginnis MP.

Mr Maginnis and his party leader, David Trimble, then left the room before Sinn Fein's president, Gerry Adams, made his reply, though other Unionists stayed behind.

According to a number of sources Mr Adams's reply was made in generalised terms, taking up less than 10 minutes. One person who was present said: "It was not a very sharp Unionist attack. It was a piece of cake for Adams to deal with it - he just took the high road, said he wanted to look forward, stretch out the hand of peace, and so on."

Various other parties contributed to the discussion, but the session lasted only 90 minutes rather than the three hours which had been set aside for it. The British go-

ernment is to give its ruling on the indictment today, but it is considered a foregone conclusion that Sinn Fein will not be ejected from Stormont.

The Unionist party has made it clear that it will remain in the talks even if, as

expected, Sinn Fein are not thrown out, though Mr Trimble said the party would vary its tactics on a day-to-day basis.

One participant described the session as a damp squib, while another said the Unionist attack must have been like "be-

ing beaten with a stick of celery." The middle of the road Alliance Party said the occasion had been "like a boxing match where one of opponents had attacked the referee and the crowd had not laid a glove on his opponent."

The Government will be happy that the occasion has passed without real fireworks and that it appeared to assume an element of ritual rather than posing any obvious danger to the continuation of talks.

Outside the talks Mr Maginnis contin-



Youthful hope: Pupils leaving St Dominic's Roman Catholic girls school in West Belfast yesterday as the talks continued at Stormont. Photograph: Brian Harris



Michael Collins: Hoped to coax Northern Ireland into a union

## A bunch of toughs, a bottle of Guinness, aristocratic sex, and the odd de Valera lecture on Irish history

The tale of the last time Ulster Unionists formally met republicans, 75 years ago, involves political drama, a great deal of violence, several bottles of Guinness and a certain amount of sex.

In 1921, with killings going on in both parts of Ireland, James Craig, prime minister of the fledgling northern state, courageously placed himself in the hands of the IRA to meet Eamon de Valera in Dublin. It was an awkward encounter, not least because a duplicitous British official had told each man that the other had requested the meeting.

De Valera recalled: "I said after the first few moments' silence, 'Well?' I then said, 'I'm too old at this political business to have nonsense of this kind, each waiting for the other to begin', and I started putting our case to him."

De Valera launched into one of his legendarily protracted reviews of Irish history, Craig later recounting that after

half an hour he "had reached the end of the era of Brian Boru". The meeting came to nothing, Craig judging de Valera "impossible".

A series of more promising meetings took place the following year between Craig and Michael Collins.

Winston Churchill, as colonial secretary, brought them together, later recording: "They met in my room at the Colonial Office which, despite its enormous size, seemed overcharged with electricity. They both glowered magnificently but after a short, commonplace talk I slipped away upon some excuse and left them together. What these two Irishmen, separated by such gulfs of religion, sentiment, and conduct, said to each other I cannot tell."

Churchill sent them in for lunch not only mutton chops but also several bottles of Guinness, apparently ignorant of the fact that Collins did not like porter.

Even without its lubricating qualities, however, Craig and Collins unexpectedly succeeded in reaching agreement on a number of issues.

According to Craig, he asked Collins "straight out whether it was his intention to have peace in Ireland or whether we were to go on with murder and strife, rivalry and boycott and unrest in Northern Ireland". Collins, he reported, "made it clear that he wanted a real peace, but hoping to coax her [Northern Ireland] into a union later".

Within days, however, the accord was swamped by escalating violence. Two further meetings were held, the second producing a detailed agreement headed by the statement: "Peace is today declared." Once again, however, the tide of violence swept the agreement aside as the south degenerated into civil war.

The element of sex in the tale came from the exotic Anglo-Irish Londonderry

family. Craig was accompanied at the final meeting by Lord Londonderry, a member of his cabinet, who also met Collins privately and later enthused: "I can say at once that I spent three of the most delightful hours that I ever spent in my life."

Londonderry may not have known that his wife had formed a close and apparently sexual attachment to Collins. In a passionate letter Collins wrote to her, he said of her husband: "I contrast myself with him, my unorthodoxness with his distinction, my rough speech with his unconscious breeding and the worst of it is I like and admire him and feel that he is brave and honest."

The 1920s meetings contain many echoes of modern politics but seem to offer few lessons apart, perhaps, from the general point that busy politicians should keep an eye on their wives.

- David McKittrick



Lady Londonderry: Passionate correspondence with Collins

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## Smuggled meat sets back hopes for easing beef ban

Hopes for an easing of the European Union's ban on British beef suffered a fresh setback yesterday after the European Commission said it had evidence that smuggled beef from the United Kingdom was getting into Germany. Brussels has asked the German authorities to order the closure of at least one meat plant and to step up controls on a handful of others, all in the Hamburg region. Bonn, which holds the key to any decision to relax the ban, immediately ruled out any support for special concessions even to Northern Ireland. Jack Cunningham, the Minister for Agriculture, admitted that Bonn's reaction in yesterday's meeting was tougher than anticipated.

The latest fraud concerns an unspecified tonnage of suspected British beef seized from plants in Germany which were raided by inspectors last week. There are growing fears in Brussels that a highly organised international fraud ring is smuggling British beef in the EU, and also to Russia. — Katherine Butler, Brussels

## Nuclear fusion sets record

Europe's flagship nuclear fusion programme has achieved a new record power output, taking the world another small but significant step down the long road to a virtually unlimited, environmentally friendly fuel source. Earlier this week the Joint European Torus (JET) in Abingdon, Oxfordshire, set a new record by generating more than 12 megawatts of fusion power — the same process that fuels the sun. This set a record for the ratio of power generated to power input: JET achieved an "efficiency" of 50 per cent, double that achieved before.

Fusion would create no hazardous waste, and could be fuelled from the sea for millions of years. However, the main thing that fusion generates at the moment is bills: JET alone has an annual budget of £54m. But scientists do not think a fusion power station will be feasible until the middle of the next century, 10 years after the concept was devised. — Charles Arthur

## PC wins tribunal against force

A policewoman who said she was told by a senior officer that women did not belong in the police and she was "taking jobs from his boys" yesterday won her sexual discrimination case. Kay Kellaway, 34, also told an industrial tribunal in Reading that she was thrown to the ground by a male inspector who called her a "whore, bitch and slag" while a report suggested she was a lesbian.

The tribunal, by a two to one majority, yesterday found that Ms Kellaway had been "discriminated against and victimised on account of her sex" by Thames Valley Police. The force, which now faces the prospect of a compensation claim from PC Kellaway, immediately said it was considering appealing against the finding. — Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

## Youth jail grossly overcrowded

A jail for young offenders aged under 21 is "bursting at the seams" with a "disturbing" number of 15- and 16-year-olds being locked up, a critical report published yesterday said. Feltham Young Offenders Institution in west London had become a "gigantic transit camp" which was "grossly overcrowded" with more than 900 inmates, said Sir David Ramsbotham, Chief Inspector of Prisons. He said that the increasing numbers and shortage of resources at the jail made it incapable of tackling re-offending.

Sir David is about to publish a special report on the condition of young offenders, which he believes need urgent attention and a designated director. — Jason Bennett



Ground flight: Pilot Andy Green walks towards Thrust SSC in preparation for his attempt yesterday evening

Photograph: Rex Features

## Genetic tests arrive in the post

**Companies offer genetic testing by post, to let prospective parents know the risk of having a child with cystic fibrosis. More tests are coming — for breast cancer, diabetes, perhaps even Alzheimer's, but the Government can't, or won't, legislate. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, asks why.**

Companies which offer genetic testing to the public will not be subject to legislation, a government-appointed committee said yesterday. But the members admitted that no law covers such companies, and that framing

one would be extremely difficult. At least two companies in the UK, University Diagnostics (UDI) of London and Leeds Antenatal Screening Service (LASS), already offer "postal" testing for the inherited genetic disease of cystic fibrosis. For between £65 and £98, they will examine a sample of saliva and determine whether it comes from someone who carries a mutation of the gene that causes the disease. If two parents have a mutated CF gene, there is a 25 per cent chance that their child will have the illness.

Tests for CF are just the beginning. Soon, companies will be able to test for a range of "late-onset" diseases, where having particular genes means the patient may become ill with breast cancer, diabetes, Alzheimer's, asthma and many other conditions which at present are only

tenuously linked to genetic causes. The Advisory Committee on Genet-ic Testing (ACGT), chaired by Professor Marcus Pembrey, yesterday published a code of practice and guidance for companies which supply human tests. It decided that tests should not be offered to people under 16, and that counselling about the meaning of a positive test should be available at no extra charge.

Professor Pembrey said that the latter was necessary because "the technique [of testing] may be simple, but interpretation is difficult".

The ACGT's decision to shy away from legislation stemmed partly from the lack of any law which could be used against companies offering testing. "In the end, it's just a service," said a Department of Health spokesman.

## Free vote for MPs on lowering gay age of consent to 16

MPs are to be offered a free vote on lowering the age of sexual consent for gay men to 16, paving the way for a change in the law. The move, which is expected to be announced by the Government in the next few days, is almost certain to lead to the reduction of the age limit for homosexual men from 18 to 16. It is understood that the new limit, which was reduced from 21 three years ago, is expected to become law by the beginning of 1999.

The move follows a decision by Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to agree to a free vote in the Commons rather than face a defeat in the European Court of Human Rights over Britain having a higher age of consent for gay men than heterosexuals.

In return, Stonewall, the gay rights' campaign group, has agreed to halt its European challenge to the UK laws. They have backed a case brought by Euan Sutherland, 20, a student, against the Government. Mr Sutherland argued that the higher age of consent breached his right of privacy and the right not to be discriminated against in his private life. A second challenge has been launched by Chris Morris, 18, who also argues that the current law is discriminatory.

Mr Straw is expected to make his announcement as soon as the European Commission publishes its response to Mr Sutherland's application. This could be as early as tomorrow.

A free vote in the Commons is expected to provide a thumping majority for lowering the age of consent, particularly as the party leaders Tony Blair, William Hague and Paddy Ashdown all voted in favour of 16 in the 1994 vote, which was defeated by a 27 majority. If there is a yes vote to a change, the Government could include it as an amendment to the forthcoming Crime and Disorder Bill. However, it is more likely to be in a separate Bill; legislation could then be introduced in just over a year.

— Jason Bennett, Crime Correspondent

## DAILY POEM

### Night Garden of the Asylum

by Elizabeth Jennings

An owl's call scrapes the stillness.  
Curtains are barriers and behind them  
The beds settle into neat rows,  
Soon they'll be ruffed.

The garden knows nothing of illness.  
Only it knows of the slow gleam  
Of stars, the moon's distilling; it knows  
Why the beds and lawns are levelled.

Then all is broken from its fullness.  
A human cry cuts across a dream.  
A wild hand squeezes an open rose.  
We are in witchcraft, bedevilled.

This week's poems come from *Beyond Bedlam* (Anvil Press, £7.95). An anthology of work "written out of mental distress", it has been edited by Kea Smith and Matthew Sweeney to mark the 750th anniversary of the Bethlehem Royal and Maudsley hospitals; proceeds from the volume go to three mental health charities. Elizabeth Jennings's poem appears in her *Collected Poems* (Carcanet).

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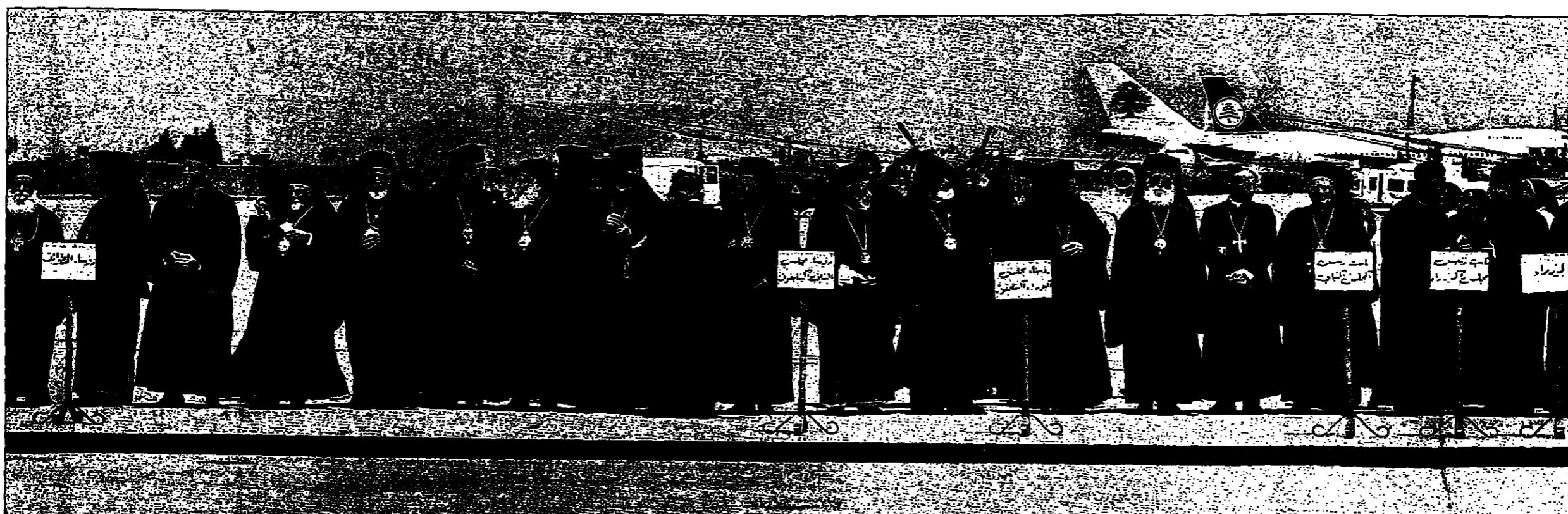
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Leaders of the churches of the Middle East waiting at Beirut airport to greet the Pope at the start of his Lebanon visit last May. The Pope made a plea for Christians not to desert the region

Photograph: Robert Fisk

## Christians of the Arab world flee their Biblical homeland

The Christians of the Middle East are making an unprecedented exodus from the lands in which their ancestors have lived since Christ taught here. At least two million are estimated to have left in the past five years alone, leaving only 12 million Christians in and around the lands of the Bible. And, as Robert Fisk reports from Bkerke, Lebanon, half the entire million-strong Christian population of the Arab world's most moderate state have departed in just 20 years.

When I walked into Father Michel Awit's office in the Christian Maronite Patriarchate yesterday afternoon, two middle-aged ladies were seeking his help. Could he call a Western embassy and help them obtain a visa to leave Lebanon? They were pleading with him. "What can I do?" he asked me, raising his shoulders in despair. "I do not want them to go - but I must help

them." Every day, the Christians drift up to the great stone palace of Cardinal Nasrallah Sfeir above Beirut to appeal for assistance in leaving the land in which their forebears have lived for two millennia.

Fr Michel fully understands the tragedy. He is the historian of Lebanon's Maronites - who are affiliated to the Roman Catholic church - and knows all too well that since the start of the country's 1975-90 civil war, the nation has haemorrhaged its Christian population. "We were a little more than a million before the war but we have lost 500,000 of our people in 22 years," he says. "The Maronites love liberty and freedom. When a Christian here sees that liberty is infringed upon, he becomes angry."

Whether or not liberties are in danger is a matter of fierce debate in Syrian-dominated Lebanon. But the disaster overwhelming the Maronite community in the country - one that Muslims suggest is of their own making - is mirrored elsewhere in the Middle East. Egypt's 6 million Christian Copts are leaving their country in tens of thousands - the community is "holding its own" by breeding as fast as its population leaves and still stands at 6 million, about 10 per cent of the population. But

Christians are increasingly a target for Islamists opposed to the government in Cairo - 25 of the 77 Egyptians murdered since February have been Christian villagers in upper Egypt - while the regime insists that even the repair of churches must receive official permission.

In Iraq, at least 50,000 Assyrian Christians left in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 Gulf War, many of them to the United States. This exodus - which still brings thousands of Christians to the Turkish and Iranian borders - was caused partly by the harshness of UN sanctions against Iraq. Church authorities in Jerusalem, where scarcely 2 per cent of the population are now Christian, lay the blame for their own plight on the Israelis and on US government support for Israel. "The Christian fundamentalists in the US support the idea of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of Israel," a church official told me yesterday. "And the US consulate in Jerusalem is the easiest place for a Palestinian to get a visa to America. Isn't that strange? Of course, the Palestinian Christians are very grateful to receive those visas. But it reduces both the Palestinian population of the city and the Christian population at the same time."

The Rev Lewis Scudder, assistant to the general secretary of the Middle East Council of Churches in Cyprus, admits that while there are no official statistics of the Christian exodus, "we know it is happening - and it is an anxiety in the church because it is the young who are leaving. And if they go, who is the next generation of adults?"

Ironically - given the Lebanese Maronite distrust of Syria - Mr Scudder says that the only Arab nation in which the Christians are maintaining their normal presence is Syria.

"It remains a secular society and they feel part of the society - the state broadcasts Christian and Easter services on television," he says.

One reason may be President Hafez Assad's ruthless suppression of the Muslim rebellion in the Syrian city of Hama in 1982, a bloodbath that Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak has so far shirked from visiting upon his own enemies. But Fr Michel says Maronites are still leaving Syria, if not in the same numbers as their co-religionists in Lebanon.

Mr Scudder believes that the exodus is partly caused by socio-economic improvements and mobility among the Middle East's middle-class Christians rather than

### THE BELIEVERS

Egypt: Population about 60 million, of whom about 10 per cent are Christians, mostly Copts. Iraq: About 3 per cent of the 18 million population are Christians, including Chaldean rite Catholics, Assyrians and Syriac Orthodox.

Israel: Population about 5 million, of whom 280,000 are Christian, though this includes the whole of Jerusalem.

Occupied Territories and Gaza: Population about 2.5 million. Christians are few in Gaza, and about 3 per cent on the West Bank, mostly Greek Orthodox or Catholic.

Jordan: Population 4.5 million, of whom about 3 per cent are Christians.

Lebanon: The 3 million population is about 65 per cent are Muslim and 35 per cent Christian, most of them Maronite Catholics.

Syria: No official statistics. It is thought about 10 per cent of Syria's 18 million are Christian, mostly of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

persecution - and the pro-Iranian Hezbollah leader in Lebanon, Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, is on good terms with the Maronite cardinal whom he has visited at Bkerke - but Lebanese Maronites are not so sure.

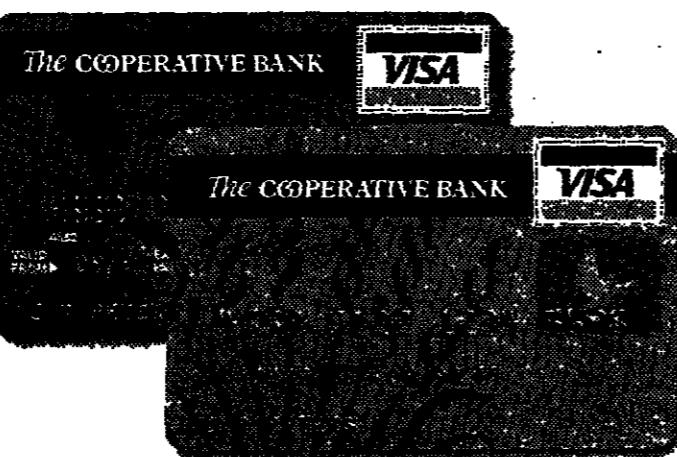
They say that under Syria's power, Lebanon's elections are a sham and its Christian parliamentary deputies and minister - under the national pact, the presi-

dent is always a Maronite - are in effect stooges of Damascus. Yet the Christians are not entirely blameless. It was the Christian Phalange militia which started the civil war in 1975 and it was a Christian president who invited Syrian troops to restore order a year later. It was a Christian Maronite general, Michel Aoun, who declared himself president and began a hopeless war of "independence" against Syria. When the Pope visited Lebanon in May, he urged Christians to stay because, he promised, there would be liberty in the future. A likely story, the Maronites thought.

Emir Hares Chehab, general secretary of the Lebanese Islamic-Christian national dialogue committee, takes a more historic view. "We Lebanese Christians are Arabs and we were Christians here for 700 years before Arabs became Muslims. The church of Antioch was the first church of Christ. Since Muslims came here 14 centuries ago, we have lived in coexistence with them. But things are changing. If we are now few in number, Islam is different from what it used to be. Islam now has a character that comes from Pakistan and Indonesia and Malaysia and Africa. The Arabs are becoming a minority in Islam."

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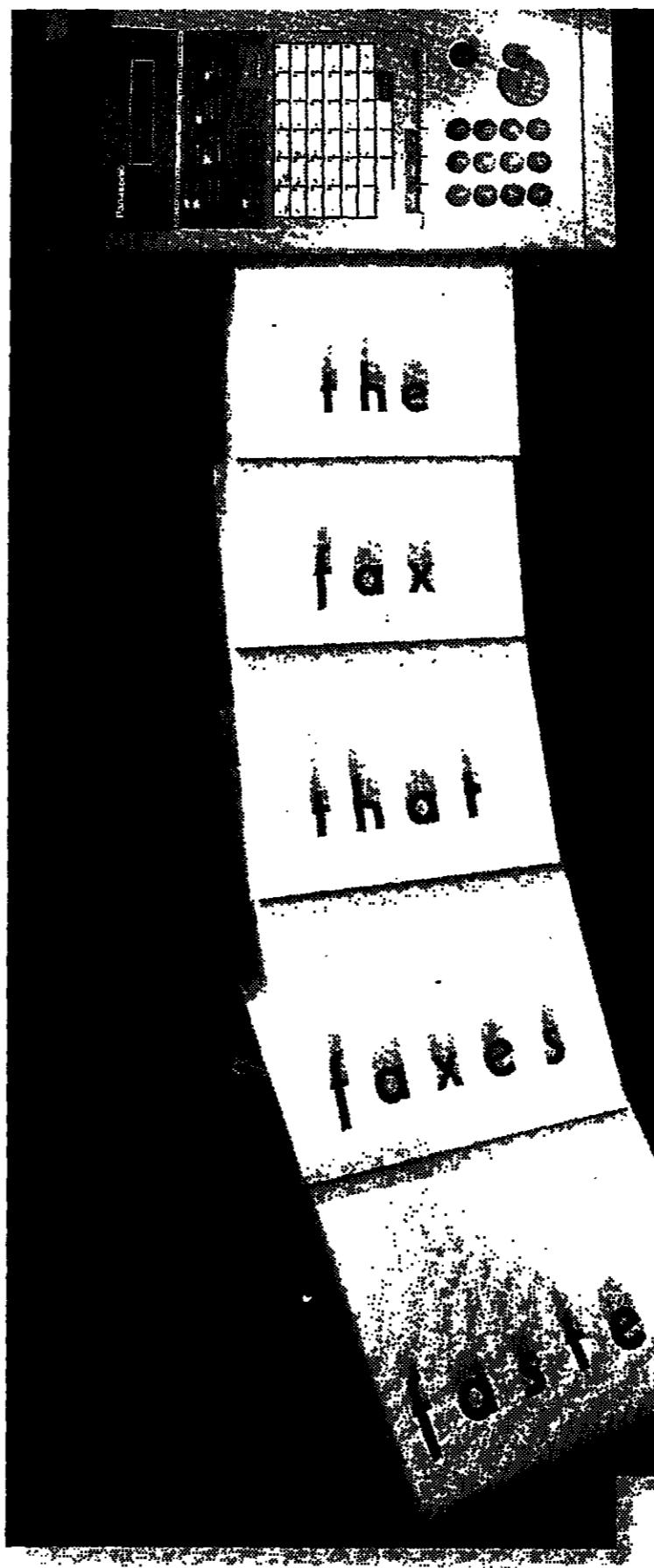
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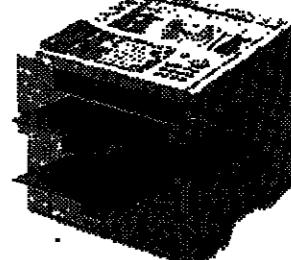
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## Teachers' leaders alert MPs to recruitment crisis

Teachers' leaders from the state and independent sectors yesterday joined forces to impress upon the Government a growing crisis in recruitment to the profession.

As Baroness Blackstone, the higher education minister, was attempting to calm fears of a further decline with a promise of £10m designed to reduce the impact of tuition fees for trainee teachers, teaching associations were issuing a whole package of measures which would be needed to reverse the downward spiral.

Their submissions, presented to a sub-committee of the Commons education and employment committee, bring together for the first time since the general election evidence of the scale of the problems which ministers acknowledge must be solved if their standards crusade is to succeed.

Teachers' leaders called for changes ranging from more rigorous entry criteria for initial teacher training courses to improved salary levels. The Head Masters' and Head Mistresses' Conference, representing independent schools, proposed a high-profile advertising campaign for the profession modelled on recruitment campaigns used by the armed forces.

According to figures from the teacher training agency, which oversees training and recruitment, significant vacancies remain on this year's courses in designated shortage sub-

jects such as modern languages, mathematics, information technology and design and technology.

Even in primary teacher training, where recruitment is considered less of a problem, applications for initial training are down by as much as 13 per cent this year compared with last.

There were increasing concerns over the quality of newly qualified teachers, the committee heard. John Sutton, General Secretary of the Secondary Heads' Association, said both quality and quantity have begun to decline in the past 18 months.

The National Primary Head Teachers' Association reported members' concerns that some teacher training institutions were reluctant to fail unsuitable candidates, and sometimes produced ambiguous references for trainees. University figures show that the average A-level points scored by entrants for undergraduate teacher training courses are the lowest in any major subject area.

• Nick Jarman, an education consultant, is to take on the temporary management of Hackney's education service. His appointment follows a highly critical inspectors' report on the local education authority in the London borough. Mr Jarman, who has worked with a range of authorities throughout the country, will continue in the job until a permanent replacement is found.

Lucy Ward

## Blunkett finds a way to ease university cuts

Universities will receive an extra £165m next year, David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, announced yesterday. Judith Judd, Education Editor, explains that the money will come mainly from savings in the way loans are paid out to students.

New students will receive their loans in three instalments instead of a lump sum from next autumn, freeing up more funds for the universities.

The package will mean projected cuts of 2.7 per cent in university spending for next year will be kept to under 1 per cent, according to Baroness Blackstone, the higher education minister.

Universities have been urging the Government to let them keep tuition fees of £1,000 a year per student to be introduced from next year and amounting to around £150m in total. Ministers yesterday would give no guarantee that they would in future be able to keep the income. A fundamental review of all public spending is being carried out across Whitehall. But vice-chancellors welcomed the package as a step in the right direction.



Photograph: Sion Tonhig

Mr Blunkett said the extra money would help to improve poorer students' chances of going to college. "It ensures that universities do not face planned

cutbacks, while at the same time enabling more people to benefit from higher education."

The new funds include £125m to raise standards and to make

a start on the backlog of building maintenance and equipment replacement, estimated by researchers at around £400m. There will be a further £4m to

allow an extra 1,000 students to receive higher education through sub-degree programmes.

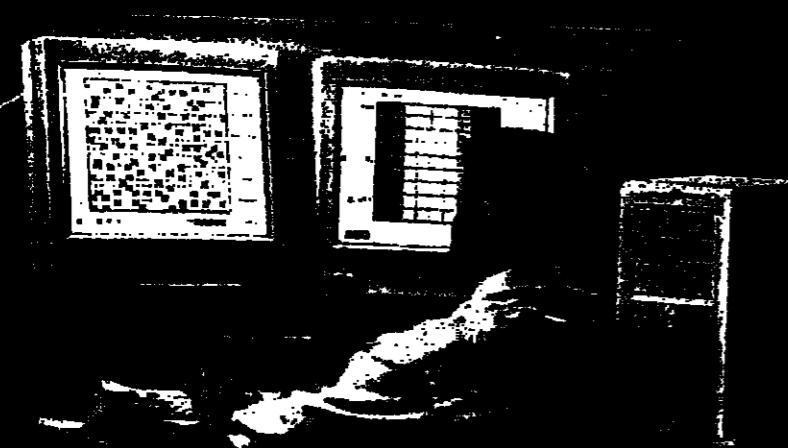
Part-time students and those facing particular hardship will benefit from an extra £36m, which will abolish means-testing for disabled students and introduce a £250 hardship loan.

Around one-third of students will not pay any fees because they come from families with gross incomes of less than £23,000. A further third will pay part of the fees.

Under the new arrangements, graduates will repay their loans over a longer period than at present. For those starting university next autumn the starting point for repayment will be an income of £10,000. Those earning £17,000 a year will repay £52 per month compared with up to £129 per month now.

Professor Martin Harris, chairman of the committee of vice-chancellors, pointed out that Sir Ron Dearing's report on higher education published in July said that universities faced a funding shortfall of £350m for next year. He said: "We welcome the Government's recognition that money from student contributions to tuition fees must be invested in higher education. There is still an urgent need for further investment in our universities if students are to get the teaching they deserve."

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## Mystery lights, file under X

Reports from a wide stretch of northern England and Scotland of strange glowing lights in the sky and a possible explosion left emergency services baffled yesterday.

Coastguards, police and the RAF began receiving calls from worried members of the public at 9am. The descriptions varied but included yellow, orange and white trails in the sky sometimes accompanied by the sound of whooshing or a loud explosion.

Sensors at the Geological Survey team in Edinburgh recorded some form of "sonic event" in the Moray Firth area. But extensive searches by RAF search and rescue helicopters, checks by coastguard and discussions with the experts at the American space agency Nasa failed to produce any explanation.

No civilian or military aircraft were reported missing or overdue and the Royal Astronomical Society and Nasa could not explain the phenomena. They were not aware of any mystery in space heading towards the Earth.

Bill McFadyen, of Aberdeen Coastguard, said the calls came from Tyne Tees up along the Scottish coast to the southern tip of the Outer Hebrides and from well inland. "It's very unusual to have something on this scale all the way up the northern coast of Britain. It's a complete mystery to us. I get the feeling that there was a series of events. I would be surprised if it was just one large event."

A spokesman for RAF Kinloss said they had searched an area between Duns and Green-

law in the Borders after a suggestion that the lights were an aircraft, but found nothing. He added that there were similar reports from the Continent - in particular around Brussels - yesterday morning.

David Galloway, of the Geological Survey in Edinburgh, said a "sonic event" had registered on six of its seismometers at 9am. This would be caused normally by an aeroplane going supersonic or a meteorite or a satellite burning up. He suspected that the lights were a meteorite coming down, but which had vapourised on entering the Earth's atmosphere. He said reports of lights were probably exaggerated by atmospheric conditions which were amplifying whatever was out there.

— Louise Jury

## Asprilla's friend guilty of possessing cocaine

An addict who bought cocaine with the help of £1,000 given to him by Faustino Asprilla, the footballer, was yesterday convicted of possessing the drug.

Leonel Sarmiento-Motora, 31, who befriended the Newcastle United striker after his arrival in Britain last year, was cleared at Southwark Crown Court of possessing cocaine with intent to supply.

Judge Peter Fingert remanded the defendant on bail until next Thursday for sentence.

But he warned Sarmiento-Motora that the almost inevitable outcome would be a prison sentence.

Asprilla told the court that he did not know the defendant was a cocaine addict or that he intended to spend the money he had given him on drugs.

Speaking through an interpreter, he told the jury he thought he was helping his fellow Colombian with accommodation problems after he was evicted from his home.

Sarmiento-Motora left court yesterday fighting back tears and said he was "too emotional" to speak.

Asprilla told the court how he got to know Sarmiento-Motora, a cleaner from north London, after his transfer to Tyne-side from Parma in Italy. He told the jury: "He said to me that he had problems with his lodgings and he had to live in a hotel and he asked me for help to pay for it. I knew nothing at all about his drug taking."

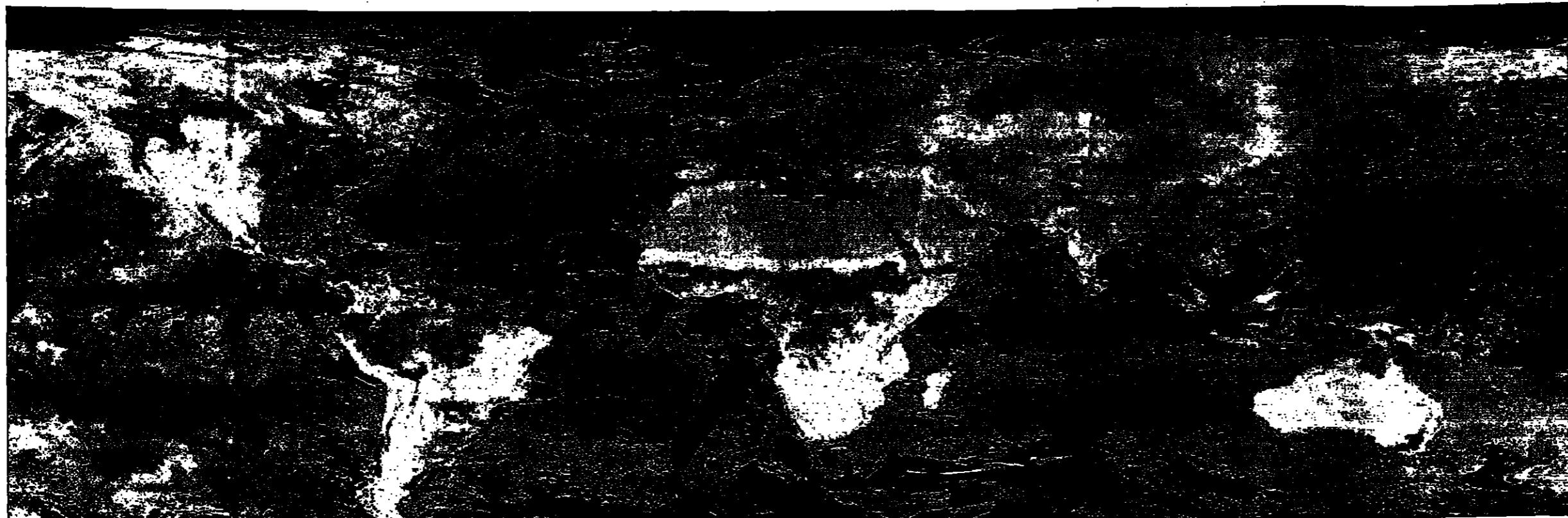
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## Space-eye view: The tiny plankton that keep the Earth alive



Just another satellite image? No – this picture, taken last weekend, shows in minute detail the density of vegetation on land and in the oceans. Charles Arthur, Science Editor, explains how the blue patches, areas of plankton, stop our atmosphere becoming a sauna.

British and American scientists got their first views yesterday of new satellite data that will provide a vital insight into interactions between the atmosphere and the oceans, which cover the majority of the Earth's surface.

They hope it can help answer two essential questions troubling atmospheric scientists: how do the oceans and continents "breathe"? And, how important are the

oceans in regulating global warming caused by the build-up of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere?

The SeaStar satellite, launched by the US space agency Nasa on 1 August, uses state-of-the-art instruments to map the amount and colour of light reflected from the world's oceans.

Though the sea may look much the same colour from the ground, from space its

colour is largely determined by the amount of microscopic plant life – called phytoplankton – living close to the surface. SeaStar's instruments can detect subtle variations in sea colour and interpret them in terms of density of plankton.

The study of plankton, a favourite food

of fish and marine mammals such as whales, may seem esoteric. But the spread of this tiny organism, and of chlorophyll con-

tained in them, has a direct and crucial effect on global warming. As plankton proliferates, it takes up carbon dioxide from the sea and converts it into carbohydrates. The sea then makes up the imbalance by absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

This simple system absorbs 5,000 billion tonnes (5 gigatonnes) of carbon from the atmosphere every year, and some of the car-

bon taken up by the plankton becomes fixed into deep-sea sediments and eventually rocks such as limestone. In this way, plankton are crucial to the regulation of global temperature.

SeaStar's data will be assessed at sites such as the Southampton Oceanography Centre and Plymouth Laboratory to see what they reveal about global vegetation patterns, both on land and in the oceans.

## France revels in its cosmic power

The 100th Ariane rocket, jewel in the crown of the European space programme, will lift off from Guyana today. Once scorned, the French-led project is now the most commercially successful space programme in the world. Where does France – the second great power in the cosmos – (boldly) go from here? To Mars maybe, as John Lichfield reports.

the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa).

France wants radical changes in the European Space Agency (ESA), in which Britain plays a relatively small role (6.7 per cent of the budget, compared to 31 per cent for France and 25 per cent for Germany). Essentially, he wants most ESA projects delegated to groups of nations, like the successful *Ariane* programme. This might be awkward for aerospace companies in the junior partner countries like Britain.

Mr Allègre has also alarmed Washington by suggesting he

The Russians no longer count. The Japanese and Chinese are not yet significant players. As the millennium ends, there are only two real powers in space. The first is hampered by statist considerations, romantic obsessions, special interest lobbies and political in-fighting. The other is commercially successful, oriented to the market, technically innovative and, under its new government, determined to be more of all three.

The first country is the United States; the second is France. The traditional earthly roles of the two countries are reversed, it seems, once you leave the atmosphere.

The 100th *Ariane* launch today is a political milestone. The *Ariane* programme – French-led, French based and 30 per cent French-funded – now holds 60 per cent of the world market in commercial satellite launches. *Ariane* makes a profit (although the wider French and European space programmes are a different story).

Technologically, there is an even more significant date for France and Europe next month with the second attempt to launch one of the new generation of *Ariane V* rockets. The first launch last June was a costly debacle. If the new, much larger, technically advanced type of *Ariane* goes up successfully in mid-October, Europe will be set to dominate the commercial satellite-launching business into the next century.

Despite the Maastricht-enforced squeeze on public spending, the new Socialist-led government in France is deeply committed to its £1.2bn a year space programme (less than one-tenth the size of America's but three times as big as Russia's). The Minister for Education and Technology, Claude Allègre, is a geo-scientist of international renown. He believes it is time for France to assert its relative cosmic strength, within Europe and

might abandon, or reduce, France's commitment to the grandiose scheme to build a permanent international orbiting space station. He believes the last, centre-right, French government made a mistake in allowing itself to be "tethered" to an American-led international space policy in this way.

In his opinion, manned

space flight is not the last human frontier; it is a costly cul-de-sac. It is precisely because France and Europe limited itself to affordable, commercially useful, albeit old-fashioned, rocket launches that *Ariane* has been such a success. The Space Shuttle – even without the *Challenger* disaster – has proved an enormously costly exercise. Driven by military and industrial lobbies, it has produced few commercial, scientific or technological benefits.

"With the incidents on *Mir*, a lot of people have actually started to ask 'what exactly are they doing up there?'" Mr Allègre said in an interview with *L'Express* last week. "We are paying a lot of money to watch astronauts climb from one capsule to another."

(None the less, France's most experienced astronaut, General Jean-Loup Chrétien, 59, will go up with the Space Shuttle *Alexis* tomorrow, in the latest mission to repair *Mir*.)

Reading between the lines of Mr Allègre's interview – and comments by the new head of the French space centre, Gérard Brachet – France will not sever its links with the planned new international space station. It will take part in the station's construction but is refusing to commit itself to the manned space activities which will follow.

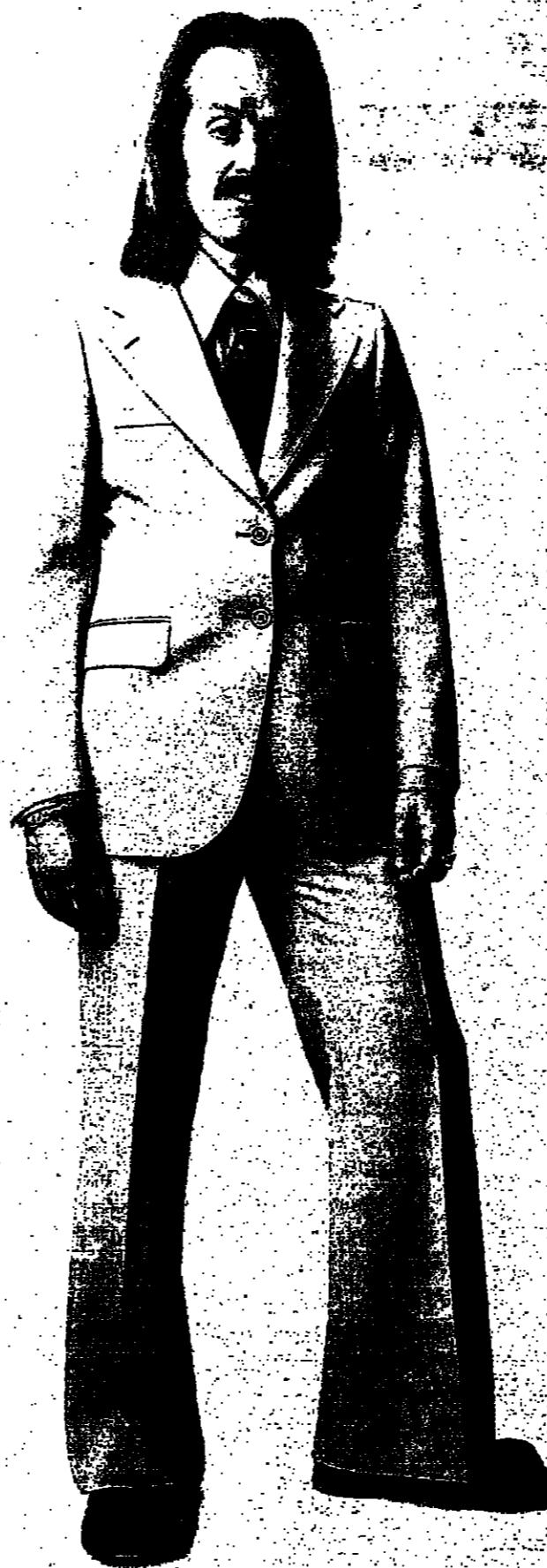
France will instead use its bargaining position with the US to seek a large role in the kind of unmanned, remotely-controlled space exploration which Mr Allègre believes will prove commercially and scientifically useful in developing the technologies of the future. In particular, France wants a share of the Martian action – for Europe, and especially for itself.

"It is unthinkable that we should be left out. That's the stuff of people's dreams," said Mr Allègre. "We aren't just going to sit back and watch the exploration of Mars."

All depends on the success of *Ariane V*, which is supposed to be capable of lifting complex vehicles into space – cheaply. If so, France hopes to persuade the US to send up new generations of American-European Martian probes from Guyana, not Florida. This may be asking a lot; but the days are gone when Americans laughed at French pretensions in space.

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## Dirty drivers face spot fines of £60

Next year, motorists with filthy exhausts will face fixed-penalty fines of £60 in seven cities. But Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, says only a nationwide crackdown would be really effective.

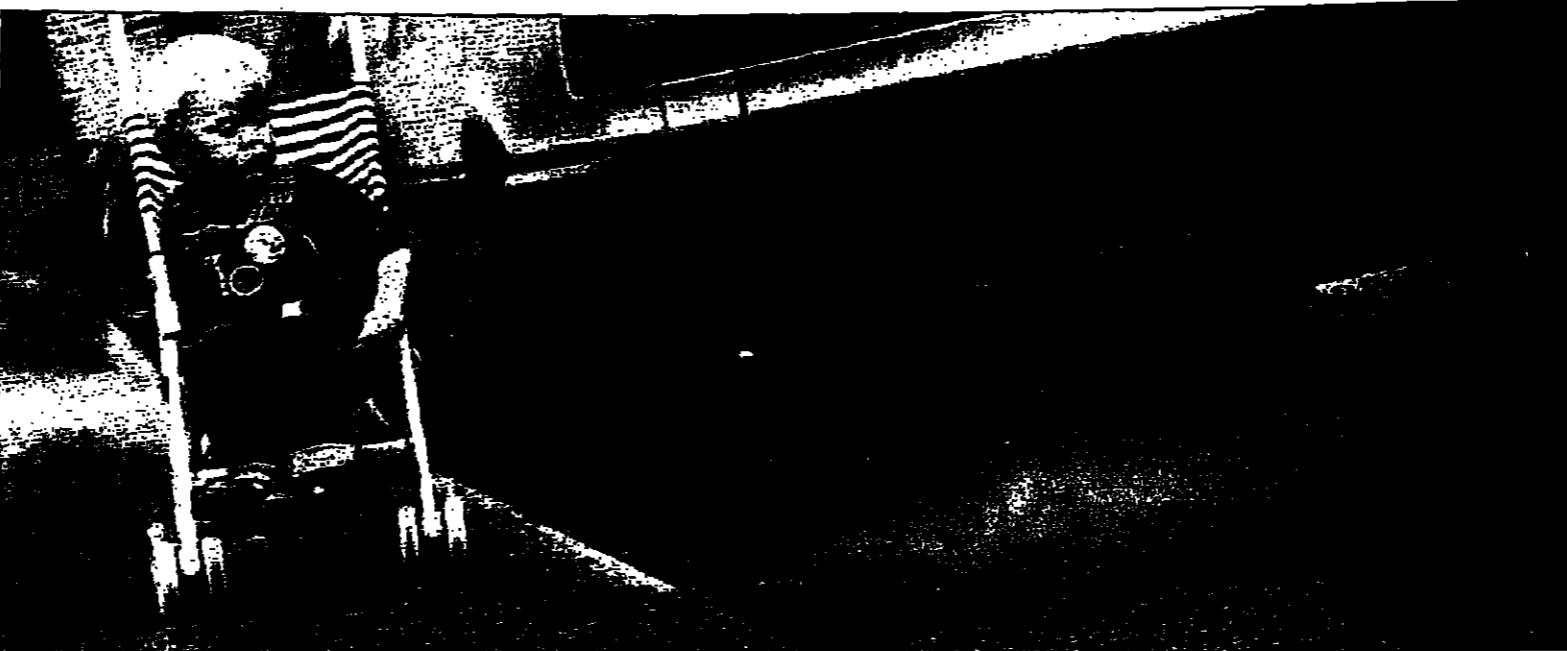
One-tenth of vehicles cause half of all the air pollution from traffic, it has been estimated. And traffic fumes are the main reason why air-quality stan-

dards are regularly breached. That is why government has long been promising to crack down on the filthy minority of older, badly maintained vehicles producing exhaust fumes which fail to meet the legal standard.

Yesterday, ministers announced that from early next year seven local councils would be allowed to stop vehicles and issue fixed-penalty fines for those that failed emission tests.

Accompanied by a police officer, trained smog-busting officials will carry out roadside tests.

The councils will not have to go to the expense of taking of-



running unnecessarily while parked will become an instantly punishable offence. If a driver of any car, however clean its exhaust, refuses to turn off an engine when reasonably asked to

do so, he or she will be ordered to pay £20.

The scheme will run for a year by the city councils of Birmingham, Glasgow, Bristol, Swansea, Middlesbrough,

Canterbury and Westminster in London, who have all volunteered for a pilot project. If it is a success, all councils will be encouraged to join.

The £60 fine for a dirty ex-

A child getting a lungful of fumes in a city street. The Government aims to clean up the air we breathe with its pilot scheme of on-the-spot fines for drivers who flout the regulations for vehicle emissions, or who sit puffing out exhausts while parked.

Photograph: John Lawrence

responsibilities. However, the Department of the Environment and Transport said that some of the money raised by the fines could be used to finance the police presence.

To date, most roadside checks on exhausts have been carried out by the Government's own vehicle inspectorate. The failure rate for cars is one in twenty; that for buses, heavy lorries and vans was lower but taxis were considerably dirtier - nearly one in ten did not meet the legal standard.

Until now, the chances of any driver being stopped for an emissions check have been extremely low. The schemes will be judged a success if they boost the number of checks and cut the number of failures in their localities. But it seems likely that only once checks are applied in towns and cities nationwide will the problem of the dirty minority be tackled and gains in air quality won.

### News Release

#### NATWEST LAUNCHES ITS FIRST INTEREST-FREE LOAN TO GRADUATES

NatWest continues its initiative to offer students and graduates help and advice on how to manage their finances effectively.

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This loan is open to graduates who completed their degrees this year or last year, providing they apply by 31 December 1997.

Qualifying graduates who currently don't bank with NatWest can also take advantage of this offer by opening a NatWest Graduate Service account.

David Bloomfield, Head of Student & Graduate Banking, said, "We are already providing advice to students while they are at university. This new move is a logical extension of our services to graduates, making the transition into the world of work much easier."

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## New law redefines treasure trove

The new Treasure Act comes into force today replacing common-law precedents and practices dating back to the time of Richard the Lionheart.

Metal detector users are the main target. The country's 30,000 "detectorists" find most of the hundreds of thousands of ancient artefacts unearthed each year. But archaeologists worry that the portable past has not been properly protected or recorded.

The Act sets out a new definition of "treasure" - notably objects at least 300 years old containing a substantial amount of gold or silver, and hoards of coins. All finds must be reported within 14 days. Anyone failing to report a discovery risks a £5,000 fine, three months in jail or both.

When a museum wishes to acquire an item declared treasure by a coroner, the finder will be paid a reward based on

market value. In one of Britain's most lucrative finds, the Homme Hoard, discovered in Suffolk in 1992, a value of £1.75m was agreed. The 15,000 Roman coins and jewellery went to the British Museum.

The Act does away with the absurdity that an object could only be declared treasure trove - technically the property of the monarch - if it had been deliberately buried with the intention of recovery. This set a coroner's jury the tricky task of divining whether someone in the Middle Ages was trying to evade taxes or simply carelessness.

Mark Fisher, the arts minister, said the Act would ensure more items were properly recorded. Metal detector users have felt victimised by the legislation, but he said that "far from curtailing their activities", the Act would remove confusion.

— Stephen Goodwin

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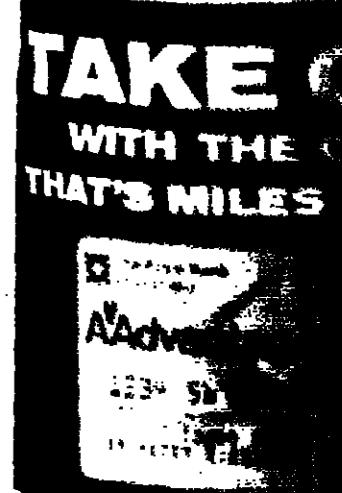
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13/DESPATCHES

THE INDEPENDENT  
WEDNESDAY  
24 SEPTEMBER 1997

## Blacks chip away at monuments to Afrikaner power



Monuments come and monuments go as the new South Africa struggles to forge a common cultural identity. Three years after the ANC came to power not everyone wants to party on the National Heritage annual holiday. Mary Braid finds out why.

The towering bronze statue of the late Steve Biko did not remain unscathed for long. Just hours after it was unveiled by President Nelson Mandela, the signature of the AWB, the right-wing Afrikaner paramilitary organisation, was spray painted at the feet of the liberation hero.

The timing made it a particularly vicious act. For as

Biko's image was being defaced the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was hearing the testimony of five security policemen who have confessed to causing his death 20 years ago. Now its threats that blood would flow before Afrikaner relinquished power have come to nothing, the extreme right seems to have turned towards more Petty forms of resistance.

Mr Biko's memorial, unveiled earlier this month, is part of what Thembu Wakashe, an arts ministry director, describes as the levelling of South Africa's lopsided heritage; a cultural terrain, which after four decades of Afrikaner nationalism, is still carpeted with monuments and memorials to "Volk" heroes and dead National Party presidents.

"There was a time when you drove through this country and looked at what was preserved and you would never have

guessed you were in an African country," says Mr Wakashe, who is at the forefront of the campaign to redefine South African culture. It is a delicate business because the resentment of the deposed, as the rare act of vandalism shows, simmers just beneath the surface.

As Biko went up this month, John Vorster, the late former National Party leader, came down. On Monday, his bust, overshadowing the entrance to the notorious Johannesburg police station which took his name, was removed to a police museum in Pretoria to claps and sarcastic shouts of "go well" from a crowd.

Today, to mark National Heritage Day, the John Vorster tower block, from which a succession of black activists "fell", will be renamed Johannesburg Central.

But such removals have been few. The ANC is deliberately tip-

toeing through the cultural minefield. In the interests of reconciliation the President has opposed wholesale toppling of the symbols of the past.

In the early days, some blacks wanted to storm Pretoria's austere Voortrekker Monument, erected as testament to the Afrikaners' conviction that they were God's chosen people. Today, many blacks still believe there has been too much pussyfooting around. This week the grandson of Enoch Sontonga, composer of the liberation anthem "Nkosi Sikele i'Afrika", said it was time for the music to stand alone as the National Anthem and that the Afrikaans "Die Stem", which was tagged on for the sake of unity, be dropped.

But so far, that has not been the ANC way. In parliament, portraits of the old NP leaders have been removed from the main foyer but they have been

rehung in siderooms. And although there have been provincial skirmishes over the removal of busts of Hendrik Verwoerd, apartheid's architect, most Afrikaner symbols have been left alone. Most remarkable perhaps, there has been no mass manufacture of Mandela statues and attempt to make a cult of his personality.

Instead the government is simply adding to a past it may detest but accepts; resurrecting black writers like Sol Plaatje and honouring black heroes.

Today, President Mandela opens Robben Island as a national monument and the island on which he was imprisoned for much of his 27-year incarceration will take its place alongside the Voortrekker.

But the right wing and Afrikaner cultural organisations which have mushroomed since 1994 seem unmoved by the softy softy approach. They

argue that while their symbols survive they are under constant threat and that their culture is wilting as schools and universities are forced to forsake Afrikaans for English. Yesterday the National Party said it still supported Heritage Day, the holiday introduced after the country's first democratic elections. But their support is hardly wholehearted. And while they condemn Biko's defacers, the Freedom Front and Conservative parties, further to the Afrikaner right, can see nothing to celebrate.

They admit that President Mandela has offered their culture some protection, but insist the pressure will increase once the "Great Reconciler" goes. "You don't throw a frog in boiling water," says Freedom Front MP Dr Pieter Mulder. "He would jump right out again. You put him in cold and slowly turn; the temperature up."

Potent symbol: Graffiti appeared on the statue of Steve Biko hours after it was unveiled. Photograph: Sean Woods

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# 14/LIB DEM CONFERENCE

## Ludicrous examples of Labour secrecy: an MP's challenge

New government, same old secrecy: details of surgeons' charges in the 1920s, a hazardous road bridge and even an 18th-century map are among the documents still kept from public view.

**Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent**, recounts a Liberal Democrat MP's fight for open government.

There are limits to the Government's commitment to freedom of information, it seems. Even after promises of a new law to bring greater openness, some documents are still so sensitive they must remain secret many years on.

"Taxi drivers carrying fares without depressing flags, 1935-1951." "Dangerous driving conditions at hump-backed bridge on Beckenham Road London, 1935-1951." "Police fees for sur-

geons 1926-1953." The release of these documents could lead to distress and even danger for police surgeons, taxi drivers and their descendants, the Cabinet Office minister Peter Kilfoyle has decided.

Mr Kilfoyle promised to look into the issue after Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, raised it in a Commons debate. But after investigations he has told the MP they cannot be released.

"All these files remain closed by Lord Chancellor's instrument as they contain information which could cause substantial distress (or endangerment from a third party) to the persons affected by their disclosure or their descendants," he has said in a letter to Mr Baker.

The MP is not impressed. "Who were these taxi drivers carrying?" he asks. "MI5 agents? Even if they were, why not just block out their names?"

Mr Kilfoyle has confirmed that the files remain closed not for reasons of national security



Closed ranks: Files on taxis carrying fares 'without depressing flags', 1935-52, remain classified. Photograph: Hulton Getty

but of "personal sensitivity". Mr Baker says there is a serious lesson to be learnt from this exchange with the minister.

"Here is the first test of this government's commitment to freedom of information. It is on something innocuous and yet they are blocking it," he says.

Mr Baker intends to appeal

to the Lord Chancellor's committee responsible for reviewing closed documents to see if he can get the decision reversed.

The MP will also raise the issue again when he lodges a Private Member's Bill on freedom of information next January. He wants the number of years for which documents are

closed reduced from 30 years to 20 but adds that the Government must also tackle a culture of secrecy which still pervades Whitehall.

Yesterday, the Lord Chancellor's department would only refer *The Independent* to the individual departments holding the documents. The oldest

closed document held by the Department of Environment is a map of the River Dee from 1771.

A Home Office spokeswoman said the files might be less innocuous than they appeared. For example, the police surgeons' papers might contain details of medical records.

## Plans for promotion of women rejected

Plans for positive discrimination to put more women on Liberal Democrat shortlists for Westminster seats were rejected yesterday, despite the support of the party leader, Paddy Ashdown.

Representatives also voted against similar proposals to put more women on internal committees but agreed that shortlists for European Parliament elections in 1999 would have 50 per cent women on them.

The rejected proposals, which meant ensuring that all parliamentary shortlists were at least 50 per cent female, provoked a fierce debate. The conference appeared to be evenly divided but the plans needed a two-thirds majority in order to be passed.

Richard Burt, a councillor from Dudley, said the moves would put discrimination into Liberal Democrat rules. "I was unfortunate enough to experience the identical changes in the Labour Party four years ago... It was a disaster."

Baroness Williams of Crosby, supporting the measures, said people would not vote for the Liberal Democrats if they thought they were not "playing fair between men and women."

"If the conference rejected the measures it would be telling them that the Liberal Democrats were not prepared to move on an issue which was crucial to our times."

— Fran Abrams

## MacLennan's proud boast: 'Free to think dangerously'

The Liberal Democrats yesterday stepped up their attacks on Labour, with the party's president offering Tony Blair 'wardrobes' full of policies. **Anthony Bevins, Political Editor, reports.**

Robert MacLennan, the Liberal Democrats' president, won a rare cheer of approval from rank and file representatives yesterday with a description of a Labour government devoid of substance and ideas.

With sections of the party exceedingly concerned that Paddy Ashdown is allowing the Liberal Democrats to be swallowed up by Labour, the leadership spent the day trying to mark out the independence of their territory.

They were helped by the intervention of Peter Mandelson,

minister without portfolio, who used a newspaper article to warn Mr Ashdown that he was playing a dangerous game if he was serious about working with Labour while making "invalid criticisms" of government spending policy.

Mr Ashdown, who addressed the conference today told *The Independent* that he was "seriously relaxed" about the Mandelson intervention, saying: "I am delighted that people are beginning to understand, some more perfectly than others, what constructive opposition is about. There seem to be some in the Labour Party who still believe that constructive opposition is compliant opposition. It isn't, and it isn't going to be."

The independent spirit of the Liberal Democrat tradition was superbly carried out by Mr MacLennan, who told the conference that the party of ideas and abundant policy could help fill the Labour vacuum. If

Labour wanted to steal the clothes of Liberal Democrat policy, he said, "we have wardrobes of clothes".

Mr MacLennan said Labour had won the election without much of a policy but with a vagueness sold with brilliance. "Labour offered a sort of bravura vacuum – everything was new, 'exciting', 'challenging', 'modern'. Four adjectives in search of a noun. Four attitudes looking for substance." But he warned that a complex world would not be met by saying those four words over and again. There had to be the equivalent of Beveridge reports.

"The swan gliding over the water is lovely, but somebody has to do the feet. We are the party of the pamphlet, the working party, the report, the debate on the report."

"If you prick us we bleed ink and ideas. Lots of us write. Many of us can read. We can also think because we are free

to be outrageous. Not being part of government, we can think dangerously."

Mr MacLennan said the Liberal Democrats should become a powerhouse of political ideas. However, he did not confine his criticism to Labour. He said that perhaps the Tory party was over. "The idea that the Conservatives might never govern again is seriously argued," he said. "The possibility that they might decline into an ideologically pure, burning bright English nationalist party is perfectly thinkable."

Last night, Malcolm Bruce, the party's Treasury spokesman, reluctantly accepted part of the Government's own conclusion on the timetable for the single currency. Having previously preferred a 1999, first-wave entry for sterling, Mr Bruce told a Confederation of British Industry fringe meeting in Eastbourne that that now seemed "increasingly unlikely".

## It's unwise to push Pinocchio too far

The small, craggy-featured man in the immaculate white shirt who sat down next to me at breakfast yesterday was ominously newspaperless – and thus in search of a conversation. He found it with the melancholic young man on the other side of the table. Time was, he told the young man in the accents of Lancashire, when the Liberal Democrats would only have held their conferences in Brighton or Blackpool. But as his party became more successful (he continued, uninterrupted), so it varied its venues. It now travelled to Harrogate, Bournemouth – to any place in fact where the Liberals now had representatives. Each in his view (the mournful youth was gazing out of the window) has its own particular strengths and weaknesses, which he happily enumerated in some detail.

Such, then, is the mood in Eastbourne, occasioned by the Lib Dems best election results since Magna Carta. With 46 MPs, they are chirpy, confident, they even swagger a little. As a party, they remind one of a nice, ordinary-looking slightly nerdy male student (computer studies and politics) who has just scored after the rag ball. No matter that the girl was drunk at the time, or on the rebound after a bad relationship with a Hooley Henry, he now feels himself to be in a position to advise others on the arts of love.

And no one is the target of more such advice than that electoral Romeo, Tony Blair. Whenever he is spoken about in public here, it is in pitying or patronising tones. He has – they all agree – no guiding ideology, no strategy, no roots.

**SKETCH**  
BY DAVID AARONOVITCH

no great principles, but rather dashes from decision to decision with manic good intention.

This is the image of Blair as a political Pinocchio, a bounding marionette with a painted smile, full of enthusiasm but seduced by any passing, glittering diversion. If ever Blair is to become – in Lib Dem terms – a real boy, then he will need to be guarded by an external conscience, admonished should he set off arm in arm with the wicked fox of power and the weeding cat of opportunism.

Few qualify better for the role of Jiminy Cricket, sent by Providence to guide the puppet's steps, than the soft-spoken Robert MacLennan, the Liberal Democrat president. Lacking only an old top hat and a furled umbrella, Jiminy MacLennan hopped up to the rostrum and warned Pinocchio of the dangers of inconstancy and lack of attention to detail. "The swan gliding over the water looks lovely," he chirruped sagely, "but someone has to do the feet". How amusing. How true.

It was a beautiful speech which elegantly reminded his listeners in the hall that they were hugely superior in wisdom and morality to everyone else on the planet, and that their one possible fault was excessive modesty. Everything that was good about New Labour had first been Liberal Democrat; the only problem being that Labour could never catch up, because, being very radical, the Lib Dems were always changing.

But what happens, I wonder, if Pinocchio gets a bit fed up with all this Polonian counsel, and tells Jiminy Cricket to take a running jump? Or, to put it another way, does not the role of effective conscience demand a certain circumspection, a level of friendly discretion?

That is not their way, alas. Back at the breakfast table, Mr Craggy was still going strong. "Eventually I'd like to see us go to Aberdeen," he was telling his over-polite, despairing young neighbour as I got up to go. Sometimes, so would I.

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## Grand old lady of Paris comes to the London stage

Next week, the Comédie Française will spearhead a French invasion of British theatreland that will last until Christmas. Here we present a portrait in words and pictures of the oldest national theatre company in the world, not seen in London since 1973.

Philippe Tesson, theatre critic of *Le Figaro*, looks at the company's 300-year history

The Comédie Française is a very old lady whose main function is to bear witness to the three centuries that made the French theatre's glory. It is commissioned to keep alive, with a duty of excellence, the national repertoire of which Molière, Racine, Marivaux are the prestigious emblems.

But like all old ladies, she

has her own coquettices and sometimes gives way to audacities more likely to be found in a young girl's character. She puts on Genet, she plays Corneille in the "destroy" style or Offenbach, in the manner of a boulevard play. She can even be eccentric. But there is no harm in her being an object of scandal for real theatre and real life are worth the price. And anyway, the Comédie Française always lands on her dignity.

For she is a national property, like the Château de Versailles, *cog au vin* or Napoleon's hat. The French keep a jealous eye on her. Created by Louis XIV, she sailed through the monarchy, the Revolution, the Empire and the Republics without any infringement of her privileged status as a public institution. She imperturbably holds out against History. The most market-oriented economists would not dare try to turn her into a private enterprise.

The Comédie Française is actually the only issue on which the French can never disagree.

By appointment to the Sun King

Founded in 1680 by Louis XIV himself, the Comédie Française originally held a royal monopoly on all theatre in the French language.

For nearly a century, it performed in a converted *jeu de paume* (a kind of tennis court) in the rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain. It then moved to the Salle des Machines at the Tuilleries and in 1789 was granted a new theatre - later renamed the Odéon - near the Luxembourg Gardens on Paris's left bank. After the French Revolution, the company briefly split into two groups: the conservatives and the liberals. The con-

servatives stayed at the Odéon, while the liberals moved to the rue de Richelieu. In 1799, the company reunited at the latter address, where it operates today.

As the Société des Comédiens-Français, the company's actors are employed under titles of great Fosses, and today number 34 sociétaires and 27 pensionnaires. Past members include such luminaries of the French stage as Rachel, Sarah Bernhardt, Jean-Louis Barrault, and Madeleine Renard.

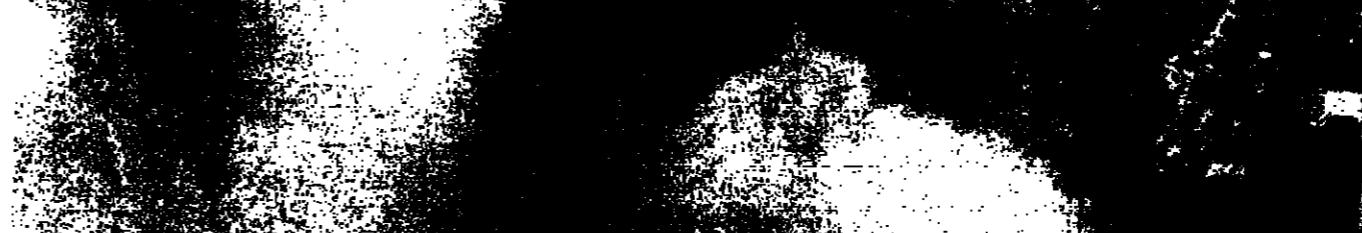
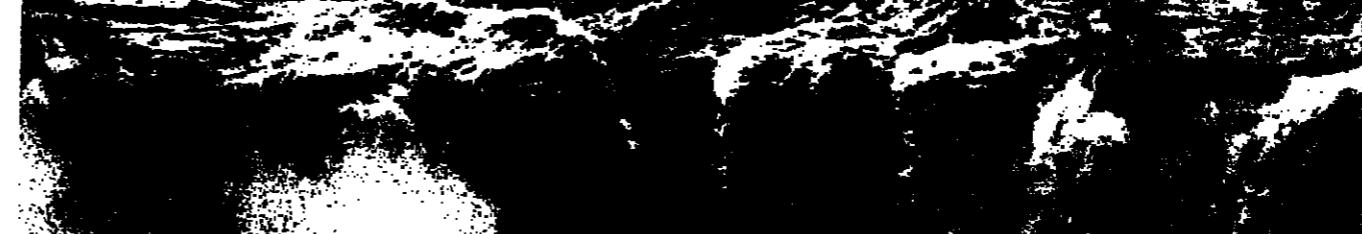
While the Comédie Française is best known for its rich productions of the classical French repertoire, its annexa-



tion of the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and addition of a Studio Theatre have led to a new flexibility in mixing old and new across the three venues.

For the company's first visit to London in over 20 years, however, and to launch the 12-week French Theatre season, Jean-Pierre Miquel, the Comédie's artistic director, has

chosen to present a true classic of the Gallic theatre - Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux's 27th play, and dramatic swansong, *Les Fausses Confidences* (1737). A hard-hitting, even scandalous, attack on class and character, it's a play whose central theme can be summed up in a single word: money.



### FRENCH THEATRE SEASON

**Les Fausses Confidences** by Marivaux  
Directed by Jean-Pierre Miquel  
Comédie Française at the Lyttelton Theatre,  
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Translated by Paul Aival  
Directed by Geoffrey Beavers  
The Orange Tree Theatre  
4-22 Nov

**Disident, Goes Without Saying**  
Translated by Peter Meyer  
Directed by Aurio Smith  
The Room, The Orange Tree Theatre  
6-23 Nov

**La Dispute by Marivaux**  
Contention by Didier-Georges Gaby  
Directed by Stanislas Nordey  
Sadler's Wells at The Peacock Theatre,  
London WC2  
29-31 Oct

With Marivaux's dark comedy and Gaby's

contemporary sequel, Stanislas Nordey explores

the force of desire in a production which fits up

this year's Avignon Festival. With subtitles

**La Maladie De La Mort** by Marguerite

**Duras**. Directed and designed by Robert Wilson  
Sadler's Wells at The Peacock Theatre, London WC2  
5-8 Nov

Through dance, music, visual arts and language, Wilson transforms Duras' modern tragedy for the stage. With English subtitles.

**The Chairs** by Eugène Ionesco  
Translated by Martin Crimp  
Directed by Simon McBurney  
Royal Court/Theatre de Complicité at The Royal Court Theatre Downstairs, London WC2  
From 19 Nov

The acclaimed Théâtre de Complicité teams up with the Royal Court for a production of Ionesco's tragic farce. Simon McBurney illustrates the tale of an elderly couple on an island with typical visual finesse.

**New Voices From France** at The Royal Court Theatre Upstairs, London WC2  
**One More Wasted Year** by Christophe Pellet  
Translated by Martin Crimp  
Directed by Mary Peate  
16-22 Nov, 9, 12, 15, 18 Dec

Rehearsed readings of Agnès by Catherine Anne Le Renard du Nord by Noëlle Renaude Mickey la Torche by Natacha de Pomchara  
Une Envie de Tuer Sur le Bout de la Langue by Xavier Durringer  
19-22 Nov

A rare opportunity for British audiences to see the most vibrant work by a new generation of French dramatists.

**Roberto Zucco** by Bernard-Marie Koltès  
Directed by Martin Crimp  
RSC at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon  
In repertory 20 Nov-11 Feb 98

The first major production of Koltès' work in Britain follows the enigmatic Roberto Zucco on a mythical journey of violence and intrigue.

**Beckett: Shorts** A special season of six short plays by Samuel Beckett  
Directed by Katie Mitchell  
RSC at The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon  
22 Oct-13 Nov

**Footfalls, Rockaby, Not I, Embers, A Piece of Monologue and That Time** have been thematically selected to provide a programme which explores time, memory, death and gender.

**Oh Les Beaux Jours** by Samuel Beckett  
Directed by Peter Brook  
Royal National Theatre at Riverside Studios, London WC2  
27 Nov-6 Dec

Wimie is buried, up to her waist, then up to her neck. With nothing but her scant possessions, fading memories and her almost comatosed spouse, Wimie becomes a survivor. Brook has chosen Beckett's French language version, written a year after the English *Happy Days*.



Philip Morris

PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY LAURIE LEWIS

The Comédie Française bring Marivaux's comedy *Les Fâusses Confidences* to the Royal National Theatre, London, for a five-day season, starting next Tuesday. The production, at the Lyttelton Theatre, will be one of the highlights of a season of French theatre that runs at various venues in London and Stratford-upon-Avon until December, showcasing the work of venerable modernist figures such as Marguérite Duras and Samuel Beckett as well as some of the young Turks of the French contemporary stage. Laurie Lewis was given exclusive backstage access to the Comédie Française before they left their base in Paris. Coraly Zohanyi (above) awaits her cue in *Les Fâusses Confidences*, while Catherine Samie (left) watches the stage action on the green room television while waiting to go on.



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## Surely there's more to life than 'This Life'?

To look at the current crop of new plays, you'd think that all twentysomethings are interested in Britpop and beer. But then again, what else are young playwrights to write about except their own inexperience?

By Dominic Cavendish



Photo: Adrian Dennis

"Something's got to be said, and I don't know if we've got anything to say," says a young woman, cradling a can of beer, surveying her audience meaningfully. In its posturing lack of assertion, this anti-statement – from *Zero*, by Frantic Assembly – could serve as the creed of a bizarre new dramatic sub-genre: the twentysomething play.

Plays written by twentysomethings, particularly male twentysomethings, have been rife for a while. But many of the so-called "bratpack" credited with rejuvenating theatre over the past few years precociously located their imaginations beyond the immediate concerns of their peer group. Martin McDonagh, for example, headed for fantasy Ireland in *The Laramie Trilogy*; Jez Butterworth for a reconfigured Fifties Soho in *Mojo*. When 31-year-old Mark Ravenhill (above) marched on to home soil with *Shopping and Fucking* last

year, it looked as though the definitive stage answer to television's *This Life* had been written in one fell swoop; henceforward it, would be hard to convey the experiences of the in-flux generation, struggling with their precarious Nineties lives, without a sense of *déjà vu*, of uninspired sameness. (Aptly, Ravenhill himself has now been commanded to breathe the angst into *This Life*'s third series).

Yet the prosaic and the repetitive, the stressed-out as much as the sexed-up, are the flaunted hallmarks of the current crop of plays about men and women barely old enough to remember the last Labour government. Even more than *Shopping and Fucking*, these co-devised pieces confine themselves to the here and now, conjuring a physically urgent sense of an age group whose time is almost audibly ticking away.

Frantic Assembly's *Zero* is TV's *Friends* without the jokes. Or the character details. It does, though, have cans of beer, which the cast throw to one another, in a chummy way, in between rushing around to screeching techno music and earnestly addressing the audience like new-found best buddies. Instead of a Manhattan apartment, they have a large, plastic doll's house. Apparently conceived "in the back of a minibus" approaching the equator in Ecuador, *Zero*'s theme is the millennium. The tone alternates between the portentous

– "We are children of chaos, children of the damned" – and the hyper-confessional: "I can see I'm really boring the tits off you".

John Keates' *27*, performed by his theatre company *Fecund*, involves a similar act of navel-gazing to bursts of Britpop and club anthems. The title marks the age at which Keates became conscious of time galloping, and provides the cue for a multi-media retrospective/celebration of his life to date: birth, school, teen crushes, university, trips to Ibiza, first shite job, London hedonism etc. He (or, at least, the actor playing him) become a kind of everybody, on a journey of self-realisation, his conclusion: "What's wrong with failure? Glorious failure?"

Keates wouldn't exactly be an ideal suit-or for Grace, the quaintly named heroine of Sarah Woods' play of the same name, who has not a gram of the chemically generation in her. Her days are spent



How do you get twentysomethings into the theatre? Give them lots of 'Shopping and Fucking'. No wonder Mark Ravenhill (left) is moving to 'This Life' (above)

sorting through the options that force their way through unopened hatch-doors in her bedroom walls as her biological alarm-clock hits 30. Her opening "memo to self", in which she makes a note to do everything from get married to swim the Channel, suggests that she could be the younger, more surreal sister of Bridget Jones. Like Ms Jones, her refrain is one of jocular exasperation – she is too panicked to have anything insightful to say.

It would be convenient to dismiss these plays as under-achieving, self-indulgent, creatively bankrupt attempts to cash in on youth culture, their truisms fit only for people with zero taste. You're in your twenties? You got nothing particular to say? Don't worry – throw on some jeans and a

T-shirt, and let's do the show right here! Except that critics and audiences alike have fallen for them in a big way. Particularly *Grace*, still on tour after a year. As Vicki Worsley, who plays the image of her former "disastrously single" self, points out, "Grace is about recognition, not revelation. Some guys ask, 'What's it about?' It is ordinary, but that's the point. It doesn't feel ordinary when you are going through it; it feels very painful."

"From the perspective of a traditional playwright, 27 is a bad play," John Keates admits, "but there is something happening, which it is difficult to define. The intention is to create emotional temperatures that, in an accumulative way, have an impact on the audience."

Director's guff, you might think, but, despite its patchy script, *27* is a surprisingly moving representation of a constantly changing period of development; like the other two works, its content is imaginatively bound up in its form.

Dramatised statements of the obvious, then, but why shouldn't theatre perform this rather modest descriptive role from time to time, in its search for new audiences and new relevance? The only danger is of course, that every young company will start feeding on its own inexperience; we'll be dragged into a youth ghetto and bludgeoned with mortgage crises and premarital hang-ups. We'll just have to learn to spot pale imitations of *This Life*: a few months ago it was Daragh Carville's *Language Roulette*,

guys and gals quick-fixing Seventies TV references at each other in a pub. At the moment, it's Matt Markham's *Questing* in Hampstead, which opens with the immortal line: "Imagine what life will be like when the last can of beer has been opened."

That's one generational gambit this particular lager-swilling 27-year-old finds impossible to swallow.

*'Questing'* to Sunday, Pentameters Theatre, London NW3 (0171 435 3648)

*'Zero'*: 13-15 October, BAC, London SW11 (0171-223 2223)

*'Grace'*: 18-19 October, BAC (as above)

*'27'*: 27 November-14 December, Oval House, London SW11 (0171-582 7680) and touring

## Full bard and lodging at the Intercontinental

At the end of August the actor Christopher Luscombe completed a 12-month stint in Stratford with the RSC. Most of his colleagues then took a well-earned break. But he set off on an international tour with his one-man show, 'Half Time'. This is his version of events...

**Tuesday 26th August**  
Heathrow. Not a great start. The plane to Cyprus was delayed and check-in was interrupted by a security alert. I still haven't recovered from the ordeal of shutting up my digs in Stratford and moving back to London, and now I'm travelling through the night with a bag of props and an addled brain. Over the next three weeks I'll be visiting five countries and ten venues with my

one-man show. Once airborne, I embark on a full fly-run (I last performed the piece more than a month ago in Chichester); the stewardess casts a nervous glance in my direction as I jabber silently to myself. I arrive as dawn breaks over the Troodos Mountains, and am met by Wing Commander Malcolm Jones, my host for the next week.

**Thursday 28th August**  
I'm performing at military bases in Cyprus, the first venue being RAF Akrotiri. Small stage, steeply-raked seating and new lighting rig – oh, and Malcolm tells me we're sold out. In other words, near-perfect conditions. It takes longer than usual for the audience – mainly officers and their wives – to start laughing. But they do seem to be listening hard (that terrible euphemism). In the second half the response picks up and I find I'm enjoying myself.

**Friday 29th August**  
An open-air show hosted by the Commander of British Forces. Normally I'd be apprehensive about going alfresco, but with such warm weather and no breeze it seems quite a good idea. The lighting is very rudimentary though, and my sound cues are relayed over the family's domestic hi-fi. But I'm determined to rise above the problems – amongst which is a pillar centre stage. Wonderfully attentive black-tie audience led by the merrily laughing Air Vice-Marshall. Occasionally visited on stage by a bat but manage to keep my concentration. Had I spotted the gecko which was apparently darting around my feet it might have been a different story.

**Monday 1st September**  
Everyone stunned by the news of Princess Diana's death. After some deliberation, the Air Vice-Marshall decides that the show must go on, so we head for Ayios Nikolaos, an army garrison to the east of the Island. We're outdoors again, but it's less picturesque this time – a makeshift stage in the corner of a huge car park, surrounded by enormous hangars. Desperately bleak by day, but by nightfall a surprisingly intimate acting area emerges. A smaller audience, perhaps because of the news. At the end I'm asked to dedicate the performance to the Princess and we all stand for the national anthem.

**We must have made a patently touching sight in this desolate car park on a far-flung patch of British territory.**

**Tuesday 2nd September**  
Stayed last night in Officer's Mess accommodation and woke up to a lavish breakfast, followed by a lazy morning reading every newspaper in sight. Tore myself away at lunchtime and Malcolm drove us to another garrison – Dheke-

lia. Took a while to galvanise the technical team (a teacher, an accountant and Kevin – a schoolboy – on lights) to the extent that I actually went to sleep during the rehearsal – a first. An enthusiastic audience, who sobered up abruptly for another curtain speech and a woefully inadequate recording of the national anthem.

**Thursday 4th September**

Arrive in Delhi to find both my performances here have been cancelled – one at the British Council, the other at the High Commissioner's Residence. The whole British Community – and most of the Indians I meet – really are in mourning, and nobody's in the mood for a comic show. So despite feeling a bit of a fraud, I resign myself to a holiday in the opulent surroundings of the H C's des res.

**Sunday 7th September**

An amazing four days, in which life's been dominated by the Princess of Wales. At the Taj Mahal, the architecture's sadly upstaged by a new tourist attraction – the bench where she sat for that famous photograph. Went to sign the book of condolences at the Commission, and to my bewilderment was rushed to the front of the long queue. Apparently all guests of the High Commissioner are given this privilege. The clerk who led me to the table dismissed my protests, although I said "who actually are you?"

**Tuesday 9th September**

From one oasis of luxury to another – the splendours of the Intercontinental Hotel in Muscat, where I'm joined by my enterprising producer, David Donabie. The hotel staff all day to turn a function room into a theatre, and we're rewarded with a terrific audience, led by the British Ambassador and his wife, who saw me a few weeks ago at Stratford and seem to be almost as well-informed about the London theatre scene as my agent. Well, better informed actually.

**Wednesday 10th September**

On to the Dubai Intercontinental, for two performances. Discover that I'm booked into Marbles Wine Bar, where the usual attraction is Madame



Christopher Luscombe: one man and his Dogberry

Huda, a voluptuous belly dancer. The audience are understandably bemused by this, but they really see that fiasco last night and conclude "One-Man Show Entertains Dubai"! Move over Paul Taylor. But tonight the show – now in a smart upstairs room – does go down a treat, although I say so myself. We're stuck for a venue over the weekend (the theatre in Doha pulled out at the last minute), but the General Manager of the hotel in Abu Dhabi is in the audience and says he'll try and fix something up for us.

**Wednesday 11th September**

A rave in the local press – did they really see that fiasco last night and conclude "One-Man Show Entertains Dubai"! Move over Paul Taylor. But tonight the show – now in a smart upstairs room – does go down a treat, although I say so myself. We're stuck for a venue over the weekend (the theatre in Doha pulled out at the last minute), but the General Manager of the hotel in Abu Dhabi is in the audience and says he'll try and fix something up for us.

**Wednesday 17th September**

The last night. Another "parlour performance", this time in Bahrain, where our hostess is Adrienne, a glamorous Armenian who seems to combine running the city's international School with coordinating the

local social scene. We celebrate the end of the tour with a night on the town, but I soon begin to wilt, and am mindful of tomorrow's early start and the flight home. It'll be strange to feel the chill of the English autumn next week in Newcastle, but I'll appreciate company both on- and off-stage at the Theatre Royal. Interventions aren't much fun in a one-man show, nor is the moment of walking into the bar afterwards, when you suddenly feel strangely guilty for single-handedly hijacking everyone's evening. At least next week Shakespeare can take some of the blame too.

Christopher Luscombe is currently appearing with the RSC in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' and 'Much Ado About Nothing' at the Theatre Royal, Newcastle. Bookings 0191-232 2061.

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Years on the  
convention needs  
correction

LONDON FASHION

From Impo

**25 years on the  
Connection needs  
no correction**

From Saturday, readers of 'The Independent' can get 15 per cent off French Connection's winter collection for men and women. Tamsin Blanchard recommends the best buys for the season ahead. Photographs by Julian Marshall

This autumn, you may sense a gap in your wardrobe for a short leather skirt with side splits; a pair of boot-cut suede trousers; or a calf-length coat with a belt and a fake fur collar. You can have them all, and save money in the process: French Connection is offering *Independent* readers 15 per cent off at its 22 stores around the country.

French Connection grew out of the founder, Stephen Marks's own label, begun in 1969. The movie *French Connection* was released in 1971, and when Marks teamed up with a Paris-based designer the following year, he borrowed the name. It was an inspired choice, giving the chain a cosmopolitan stamp. "The whole idea was to bring designer fashion to the high street," says Marks, in between this week's shop openings in Watford, Amsterdam, Miami and Pasadena.

FC's strength has always been its ability to produce design-led fashion at affordable prices. One of the strongest pieces for this season, a green Indian embroidered and sequined dress, takes the label full circle back to the early days when ethnic fabrics were its trademark.

French Connection launched its range for men in 1976, and in 1986 followed it with childrenswear.

By definition, fashion changes constantly. The secret of survival is to keep one step ahead of the pack. On the whole, French Connection has achieved this. It has even managed to develop its own controversial advertising campaign, with ad man of the moment Trevor Beattie. Just four letters, FCUK, have worked miracles for the company's street cred. A simple white T-shirt bearing the logo FCUK has become a clubber's must-have and created a new generation of customer for the company.

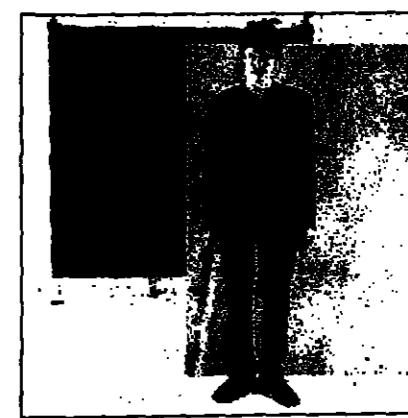
"I wanted the advertising to stand out," says Marks. And the stark white advert, some without a product in sight, do just that, and with a sense of humour. "All we're making is a few frocks," he says.

FC has managed to evolve with the Nineties from something that, in the Eighties, was in danger of becoming tired and dated, into something minimal and modern; and that's just the shop fittings. The clothes achieve a clever balance, reflecting catwalk trends without alienating the customer. French Connection fans know they can find comfort and utility as well as something a bit out of the ordinary. The company offers a range of clothes that is, says Marks, "a little more forward".

One of the main differences between designer fashion and the high street version is the willingness of the retailer to compromise. The catwalk may dictate power shoulders, but if the consumer thinks they look ridiculous, she won't buy them. "The public are the best judges," says Marks. "And when they're buying in the quantities they are, then we're giving them what they want."

For men who can shop for themselves there are leather and suede jackets and knitwear that ranges from rugged and chunky to fine-gauge and V-necked. There are also shoes, and scarves that look hand-knitted.

For work, French Connection offers the best classic single-breasted suit for £220. That's a saving of £33 with one of *The Independent's* exclusive discount tokens. How can you afford not to go shopping? FC! OK.



**Main photograph:** Green sheer sequin shift with underslip, £100; scarf, £30; cardigan £60  
**Far left:** Man's camel suede shirt, £225; boudoir scarf, £15  
**Left:** Tie-front grey coat with fake fur collar, £200; grey sparkle v-neck t-shirt, £30

**Above, from top:**  
 Man's navy fleece zip-up top, £70. Man's brown single-breasted suit jacket, £140; trousers, £80; orange V-neck jumper with shoulder stripe, £50; black loafers with twist detail, £90. Beige V-neck t-shirt, £20; beige suede trousers, £160; camel ponyskin desert boots, £86. Grey single-breasted suit jacket, £160; trousers, £70; scarf £30.

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**Make-up:** Alex Babek  
**Models:** Nathalie and Freddy at Select  
**Photographer's assistant:** Ben Haines

**LONDON FASHION WEEK**

**From Impossible to be Worse to Hard to be Better**

Spain's top fashion designer is slumped in a chair, sucking on a Marlboro. She doesn't look like the glamorous vision her press clippings suggest, but Amaya Arzuaga can be forgiven. Having flown into London from Madrid, where she has been celebrating the end of Spanish Fashion Week, the 27-year-old looks in need of a rest. But that will have to wait. There is next Tuesday's fashion show to organise.

Arzuaga is half-way there already. Her spring/summer collection for men and women sits on rails in the spacious studio of her

London agent, Palladio. There are similar rails in Paris, Milan, New York and Madrid. This is not unusual for a designer who despite her youth is extremely organised; she has 300 stockists world-wide, and an annual turnover of £10m.

Arzuaga showed for the first time in London last March. The show made the front page in Spain, where she is designer of the year, but she seems uninterested by their adulation.

The young Amaya grew up on a sprawling estate near Madrid. "It was not like Falcon Crest, you know," she insists when asked about her upbringing; and this is despite sharing the grounds

of her family home with 300 wild deer. However, it is clear that she is now fairly shy of the high life. "I do not mix with fashion people. I live in the country and read a lot," she says. Ten years ago it was different. Miss Arzuaga was a wild child. She sang in a band called Impossible to be Worse, hung out with Almodovar's muse Rosie de Palma, and wore the most outrageous *Gaultier* she could find.

After attending the Madrid University of Fashion, Arzuaga designed her first knitwear collection, and sold it in Paris. She is

known for clever and colourful knitwear designs that marry unusual fabric combinations, and for the latest in computer technology, but colour and texture is where she excels. "It is a misconception that I only do knits," she says. In fact, though stores such as Whistles, Liberty and Browns Focus sell her jumpers, there is much more to Amaya Arzuaga clothes.

The collection that is being shown as part of London Fashion Week is her seventh. About one-third is knitwear; the rest is a confection of quirky, Waiter!

asymmetrical slip dresses with delicate embroidery. It also features candy-striped men's trousers and shorts. Elements of London style include hand-painted shirts and dresses, and lopsided vest tops with layers of stretch organza over textured prints. There is also a line of sunglasses and jewellery. What next? Well, if her clothes are anything to go by, her father's wine must be a very pleasant tipple.

Melanie Rickey  
 Portrait: Outumura



# 20/FEATURES



## BELOVED AND BONK

### Diary of a divorce

It's a funny old place, grief. In the past month since Beloved left, I've found myself sobbing gratefully in the arms of Tories, Masons and even, God help me, people who would vote double yes to devolving their parish council.

It's not that I simply force myself on complete strangers and say excuse me my husband has just left me, I need to soak your lapels and smear snot down your collar for a few moments. No, it's more that huge amounts of compassion and warmth lurk in the most unexpected of places. I mean, I'm a good left-wing liberal and I make hard and prejudiced judgements about people on the basis of dress, accent and vehicle. So it comes as a shock to discover that Land-Rover drivers with Sloane habits and county voices can press you to their bosom with greater sincerity than Levi wearers with glottal stops and old Citroëns.

In fact, it has been a month of discoveries. I have discovered how people come to do murder, suicide and anaesthetic-free willy-o-ectomy; I've discovered that violently unister thoughts about Beloved's Bonk are a great comfort at four in the morning; and I've discovered how to change the message on the answering machine. This last nearly led me into seriously unacceptable behaviour, of which Beloved would most definitely not have approved. I changed our old message (Beloved gloomily giving his many alternative numbers) to a new one, me saying hello and giving one of Beloved's alternative numbers. As I did it, the options open to me became apparent: "Hello leave a message after the tone. If you wish to contact Beloved you are not my friend anymore" or "If you wish to contact Beloved you need therapy" "If you wish to contact Beloved phone him between 1 and 3am." I finally settled on "and if you wish to contact Beloved you'll need a Ouija board." I left it on the machine for about an hour, twitching nervously right next to the phone, and then I chickened out, because I cling, in the face of all the evidence to the contrary I cling to the hope that Beloved will leave Bonk and come back to me and I feel that "Contact Beloved by Ouija" is not a message that would smooth his safe passage home.

Of course there isn't anything that will do that, so I've found myself looking for signs and portents of the sort I used to predict the outcome of spelling tests or adolescent crushes. "If the next car is a yellow golf then he still loves me." Well not quite like that because I don't think they made yellow golfs so I'd be setting myself up for a lifetime of failed spelling tests and broken marriages wouldn't I? The one I tried last week was "If he sees me in this new dress it'll all be OK". I had it planned ... my exit to a solo outing as he arrived to pick up the kids. But for the first time in our entire married life he was early. Instead of a brief swirl of blue silk and black high heels as I slammed the back door in nonchalant defiance, he stuck upstairs and caught me doing my mascara in the landing mirror with my tights on over my knickers and no dress. Then when I finally teetered resplendent into the kitchen, the straps on my shoes were too loose and I had to climb off them and try making an extra hole with the corkscrew. By this time I was shaking with the strain so I unfastened the strap and nearly speared a major artery.

But maybe it was a good portent, because he made the holes for me with some evening-shoe-strap-holing device on his Swiss army knife. Knives? Puncturing? Yes come in Mr Freud ... I could still have a chance.

Stevie Morgan



Photograph: Tom Pilston

## Give in, cop out - a mother's confession

**What are we doing to our children? Bringing them up to express themselves freely in a way we never could, or failing them by refusing to teach them how to behave? Is it because we are enlightened that we give them their own way? No, says Diana Appleby, it is because we feel guilty ...**

I recently had tea in one of those grand old fusty hotels, in Leamington Spa, with my grandmother and mother. I took along my four and nine-year-old daughters, both giving smart dresses a rare airing. I felt so proud of them as we walked in. While we were waiting for the tea to arrive, my four-year-old behaved as she always does - climbing over the chair, peeping at people, and then, bored, trotting up and down the aisles of chairs, singing happily to herself. I smiled fondly at her, until I realised my grandmother was not smiling. She was appalled. "You would never have behaved like this," she said. "Oh, come on nanan," I said. "She's only four." My mum burst in, "No, you wouldn't." Thinking about it on the way home, I realised that no, I

probably wouldn't. My sister and I would have sat quietly on the edge of our seats, buttoned up in well-pressed Windsor Woolly outfits. If I'd started to climb on my seat, or shouted, my mum would have smartly removed me from the hotel lounge and I would have been in severe disgrace. My whole approach to parenting is radically different from my mother's. It took this one small episode to remind me how different. Our children wear bright, stretchy leggings from Next, T-shirts and soft Lyca rights. Their clothes are like mine - stretchy, bendy, do what you want.

We give in over all sorts of matters, large and small. Go to the supermarket any day of the week, and you'll hear children pushing their parents to the limit with demands for sweets, throwing themselves to the ground, yelling, refusing to move. And what do we do? Instead of smacking the child hard - in front of other people - tucking them under one arm and walking out of the supermarket never to return, we negotiate. We say, "If you stop behaving like this then you can have some sweets. If you're good you can sit in the front on the way home." Our generation of parents believe you don't impose absolute authority on children - you negotiate, let them have their say, and their way.

Are we producing self-aware children? or 'uncontrollable ones'? Many of my friends - including mothers who stay at home - say they are finding it harder and harder to control their children. My own nine-year-old will frequently answer me back - in public - and almost every request is met with, "Why?" or, "So what?" The question is - why have we changed our parenting styles so radically from those of our parents? Is it love? Or is it something else? Guilt? Guilt!

The main difference is of course that often both parents work," says Jeni Renwick-Smith, a child psychologist who deals with behavioural problems. "Instead of the mother making it her main job to bring up children, we rely on childminders, nurseries, nannies or au pairs. Even grandparents now are often too busy, or live too far away to help."

Of course, she says, there have always been children who were cheeky or rebellious, but now she fears we are creating a generation of deeply insecure children - who don't react to their parent's attempts at discipline because it isn't consistent. Most parents feel they're doing their best - but often they're simply not. "This is very hard to say and I don't want to impose further guilt on mothers who have to work, but if a child goes through a lot of

changes in the years before they are five it does have an effect. We are forcing our children to be independent much earlier. Most children search for consistency and boundaries. If a creche has different members of staff each week, that is enormously confusing to a young child. If a nanny or au pair suddenly leaves, then that is a loss tantamount in importance to a death - and they will think it's their fault."

"To a young child, the adult they're with is their whole world. Anyone in child psychology will tell you that if you change those adults on a frequent basis, a child will become very unhappy and very insecure."

"If you leave the upbringing of your child to a constantly changing rota of adults with different sets of rules, you cannot expect your child to accept your rules at home. They will become very confused, if they're allowed to do certain things at the creche, but not at home. It's insecurity we're talking about; and it's not an intellectual problem, but an emotional one."

This makes very uncomfortable reading to so many of us, who exist in a generation

Jeni Renwick-Smith goes as far as to say she shudders to think what our children's parenting skills will be like.

"It is a conundrum for every working parent I know. We try so hard to think we are doing the best we can for our children, and we try to compensate in so many ways for simply not being there."

This says Renwick-Smith, is why we see so many children throwing tantrums and refusing to accept authority, and why older children seem so reluctant to accept our rules.

"We refuse to accept that parenting is a long, hard, consistent slog. It is hard work to make children behave. You have to be ruthless at times, and unpleasant. When you've done a full week's work and you're confronted with a screaming child in a crowded supermarket on a Saturday, do you really feel up to a blazing row?"

"Laying the law down and denying our children things they want is so hard for us - because we're so scared of pushing them away - we feel so guilty about working in the first place. It's not just parents. It's now the philosophy of most schools to let children self-express - if they're bored sitting down, they get up and wander around. Children are taught to think for more independently, and not be afraid to voice their own opinions.

"This is a positive step forward, but what's also happening is that many of the teenagers I see have little or no awareness of other people's feelings. We give in to our children so often to make up for not being there. We're not teaching them to think about other people's needs," says Renwick-Smith.

My mother regarded bringing myself and my sister up as her main job. If we behaved badly, it reflected on her skills as a parent. I have spent much more time working than I have bringing up my children. There is now a much greater acceptance of uncontrolled behaviour - if my children behave appallingly in public I get sympathy, not opprobrium.

The main period of change in parenting came in the sixties, when the extremes of libertarian philosophy filtered down gradually to ordinary young parents and became authorised by Dr Spock and, later, Penelope Leach. Authoritarianism will never return - and shouldn't, says Renwick-Smith, citing the example of Japan, which has one of the highest rates of child suicide and depression in the civilised world. But many of us are slowly coming round to the idea that children do not necessarily know best, and that in over-compensating for the lack of time we spend with them we might be creating a generation of insecure brats.

## DEBORAH ROSS

### Was I curried by Edwina?

On Saturday I interviewed Edwina Currie. On Monday morning, that interview appeared in this paper. On Monday afternoon, Edwina announced her 26-year marriage to Ray Currie was over. Come. Come my answerphone was flashing with messages that went: "Is scoop there?" Oh, bloody-ha.

But did I really miss the story? No, I did not. My own view is that it was Edwina who missed the opportunity to tell me, which is a shame, because I am a very sympathetic listener and could have said some useful things along the lines of "How did Ray put up with you for as long as he did?" and "What did he see in you in the first place, anyway?"

Now, I'm not saying Edwina isn't entirely without some endearing characteristics. She is, at heart, a very caring, warm person, the sort who had worked out that her elderly mother had sufficient funds to provide for her own nursing care for "two and a half years should it come to it". Certainly, she is not the monster of self-obsession she is often made out to be.

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I spent eight hours with her, all and all, and during this time she often asked me questions about myself. One was: "Would you mind carrying my bag?" And that was about it, actually.

Anyway, I did ask Edwina about her marriage. Truly, I did. And she said the things she always says about her marriage. Ray is brilliant. Ray likes a quiet life and lets her do her own thing. Ray enjoys my books enormously. Edwina writes a lot about sex. And talks about it a lot, too. Some people say that those who go on and on about sex do so because they aren't getting any. Perhaps, yes, I did miss a clue here.

But what if I'd asked: "Are you and Ray about to split up?" Would she have answered truthfully? I don't think so. Hang on, are you saying that Edwina would have lied? No, of course I'm not. She is, I'm sure, a very honest person. But she lied to the press all the time when her daughter, Debbie, went about pretending to be a pop star. "I found myself telling lies! Bald-faced lies! And when Debbie and I read them back we were in stitches."

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# 21/OBITUARIES

THE INDEPENDENT  
WEDNESDAY  
24 SEPTEMBER 1997

## Jimmy Witherspoon

James (Jimmy) Witherspoon, blues singer; born Gurdon, Arkansas 8 August 1923; died Los Angeles 18 September 1997.

The man who invented the word "lugubrious" must have had Jimmy Witherspoon at the forefront of his mind. Spoon's blues were classic, macho, tragic and vivid. If fish can love under water, And worms can love underground, Woman, you'd better not turn me down...

When the points are added up Witherspoon stands out as having been the ultimate amongst the troubadours of sexual disaster. He ranked with Joe Turner and Joe Williams as the most powerful of the city blues singers, and his instinct for the music gained him an enormous following throughout the world. He was particularly popular in Britain, coming there first in the early Sixties and returning until his final job last year at the Jazz Café in London.

Witherspoon began singing as a soloist in the family church when he was five years old. He left his school in Arkansas in 1939 when he was 16, forged a rail pass (his father had been a brakeman on the Missouri Pacific Railroad), and made his

way to Hollywood, where he hoped to begin a career as a singer. In the great tradition of such journeys, he wound up as a dish-washer at the Owl Drug-store. The young boy sang whenever the opportunity presented itself, and sat in with Art Tatum, Slam Stewart and T-Bone Walker.

Witherspoon joined the Merchant Marine in 1941 and, when his ship docked for repairs at Calcutta, sang for a time with the band led by the American pianist Teddy Weatherford. He returned to California at an opposite moment in 1944 when the legendary blues singer Walter Brown had just left the band led by another pianist, Jay McShann (with whom, incidentally, Charlie Parker had begun his career a short time earlier).

The two men got on well together, and Witherspoon built up his name with McShann, staying until 1948.

"I never forgot the first theatre date I played. I had been looking forward to it for a year and a half. It was at the Regal Theatre in Chicago, and Dinah Washington and the Ravens were also on the bill.

They went to the manager and said that there was too much singing, so they cut me out of the show. That hurt me worse than anything in my life. (This was

All I'd been doing was opening the show; and Dinah was the star.)

McShann knocked the corners off Witherspoon and taught him about the raw side of music. Like many singers Witherspoon was restricted to singing in his favourite keys. Instrumentalists tend to look down on vocalists because the singers don't have to put in the years of learning and practice that a horn player needs to learn his craft. Witherspoon was aware of this when Art Tatum invited him to sing a number at a bar in Los Angeles where the pianist was playing.

"He started in B-flat, but after that he went into every key in the ladder, and I didn't know which key he was in. Jay had told me that he'd do this, so I paid no attention to Art and his chord structures, kept my mind on B-flat, and sang right through.

"Spoon," he said, hitting me on the shoulder and laughing, "Nobody in the world can do that."

Leaving McShann the singer settled in California, but he called McShann back when he recorded "Ain't Nobody's Business", a ponderous blues which immediately became a hit in the rhythm-and-blues field and was to stay in his repertoire for the rest of his life. (This was

not unusual, for a Witherspoon programme remained the same night after night, year after year, with even the "spontaneous" announcements and cracks paraded at every performance.)

Witherspoon continued to have hit records and extracts from some of his most atmospheric concerts were issued on 78s with great success. But the tide of rock-and-roll enveloped him and business fell away, leaving him bankrupt in 1953.

His career was revived in 1958 when, having abandoned the rhythm-and-blues style of some of his hits, he began recording albums with jazz musicians. A sensational appearance at the 1959 Monterey Jazz Festival when he sang with Earl Hines, Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Woody Herman and Roy Eldridge gained him respect from the jazz specialists. Another session recorded the same year at the Renaissance Club in Hollywood had him backed by Webster, Gerry Mulligan and Jimmy Rowles and confirmed the jazz qualities of his singing. His work appeared on an abundance of labels.

He toured Europe with Buck Clayton's band in 1961 and went to Japan with Count Basie in 1963. He returned to Europe to tour each year

throughout the Sixties and returned to the "pop" fold to have his "You're Next" recording enter the Hot 100 Hits of 1965. He worked briefly as a radio disc jockey and as an actor in the film *Black Godfather*. For his work in the latter the Black American Cinema Society gave him the Billie Holiday Phoenix Award.

Witherspoon worked for

Ernie Garside, the Manchester jazz impresario, and made several albums in England. When, in 1984, Witherspoon became ill in Manchester he was diagnosed as having cancer of the throat and received immediate and vital treatment at Christie's Hospital. After a long fight he was able to return to singing a year or so later, but his consequent lack of stamina meant that he could appear only in very short sets. His voice was deeper and less flexible than before and he adopted a more intimate manner of projecting it.

He returned some five years ago to the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre, which he regarded as a "thank you" re-appearance to Christie's.

Witherspoon could be a difficult man, subject as he was to mood swings and ego problems, but perhaps this simply placed him in the operatic, as well as the blues, tradition.

- Steve Voce



'Spoon': a troubadour of sexual disaster

Photograph: Redfern

## Helen Jepson

Helen Jepson, soprano; born Titusville, Pennsylvania 28 November 1904; twice married (one son, one daughter); died Bradenton, Florida 16 September 1997.

The first singer to reach the Metropolitan Opera through the medium of radio, Helen Jepson was a lyric soprano with a dark-eyed, blonde-haired beauty that matched her charming voice.

In the Thirties and Forties, American opera-goers were delighted to see a home-grown soprano alongside the more prominent European stars of the day, and she became a major attraction at the Met and other opera companies. She was the first soprano to record Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, had a starring role in the film *The Goldwyn Follies* (1938) and sang on radio with the bands of Paul Whiteman and Rudy Vallee, both of whom later claimed her as their discovery. In fact,

the conductor Philip James first featured her with his Hamburger Symphony Orchestra on a local New Jersey broadcast in June 1933, months before she attracted the interest of those two gentlemen.

Born in Titusville, Pennsylvania, in 1904, Jepson grew up in Akron, Ohio, where she used her voice and had leading roles in high-school productions of *I Pagliacci*, *The Bohemian Girl* and *HMS Pinafore*. She sold corsets and gramophone records to pay for tuition (also listening closely to records of Rosa Ponselle and other stars of the day) and won a scholarship to the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia.

While a student, she sang with the Philadelphia Civic Opera and organised a summer troupe with three other singers. Calling themselves the Mississippi Misses, they travelled 6,000 miles in 12 weeks giving concerts in 87 towns. In 1930, after appearances with the Philadelphia Symphony Or-

chestra and the Civic Opera, she created a sensation playing Nedda in *I Pagliacci* with the Philadelphia Grand Opera. She stayed with the company for three seasons until its financial collapse in 1932.

Moving to Manhattan with her husband, the flautist George Possell, she made her coast-to-coast radio debut singing "The Jewel Song" from Faust on Rudy Vallee's *Fleischman Hour*, on Columbus Day 1933 (after which Vallee referred to himself as her "Columbus"). Engaged to make weekly appearances on the Paul Whiteman show, she was voted Most Important New Air Personality of 1934.

Her broadcasts attracted the attention of the Metropolitan and she made her debut with them on 24 January 1935 in the world premiere of Horatio Seymour's one-act opera *In the Pines*. Starring the great baritone Lawrence Tibbett as a stern papa who buries his wife's lover alive in a trunk (in which he had been hiding),

it was a weak piece, but Jepson was acclaimed for her beauty, voice and charm. Violetta, Louise, Nedda, Mélisande and Desdemona were among roles that followed, while she continued to get regular bookings on the radio on *The Bell Telephone Hour*, *Your Hit Parade* and other shows.

On 10 October 1935 *Porgy and Bess*, the superb folk-opera by George and Ira Gershwin and DuBois Heyward, had its premiere in New York, and just four days later Jepson and Tibbett recorded its songs for Victor Records with the orchestra and chorus of the stage production. It was well known that George Gershwin had originally hoped that Tibbett might create the role of Porgy and the composer supervised the recordings, which have frequently been reissued and still impress. (The original leads, Todd Duncan and Anne Brown, eventually recorded their roles in 1940 for Decca.)

Jepson made few other

recordings, though she put her Desdemona on disc in an abridged 12-part version of Verdi's *Otello* (with Giovanni Martinelli as the Moor and Tibbett as Iago) in 1939.

Two years earlier, Sam Goldwyn, planning a film extravaganza called *The Goldwyn Follies* (to rival on screen the stage revues of Ziegfeld), cast Jepson as one of the stars. The resultant mélange of comedy acts, opera, ballet, jazz and popular music, linked by the wisp of a story, was an indigestible hodge-podge but there were some compensations, including luscious colour, songs by the Gershwines, and the preservation on film of Jepson singing "The Brindisi" from Verdi's *La Traviata* (with Charles Kullmann), Enrico Toselli's *La Serenata*, a chorus of the Gershwines' "Love Walked In" (with Kenny Baker) and, best of all, a soaring "Sempre Libre" which wittily displayed her fine coloratura.

Paramount announced that

it would be signing Jepson to a contract for a string of filmed operettas, but, perhaps because other opera stars (including Tibbett) had failed to prove box-office draws, the plan fell through.

Divorced in the early Forties and remarried (to Walter Delera), Jepson continued to headline at the Met while doing concerts and broadcasts until a throat ailment forced her retirement in 1947. She became a voice teacher (one of her pupils was the future stage and television star Edie Adams), then returned to college in New Jersey to study speech therapy for handicapped children, taking up volunteer work in her local Cerebral Palsy Rehabilitation Centre.

She continued to attend the opera regularly and was usually a guest attraction at the Met's special events, where she was always given an ovation befitting of one of the house's great sopranos.

- Tom Vallance



Jepson: radio debut in 1933

Photograph: Photofest

## Professor Roger Hardisty

Roger Michael Hardisty, haematologist; born London 19 September 1922; Professor of Haematology, Institute of Child Health, London 1969-87; Emeritus Professor, Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine 1987-97; married 1947 Joyce Jarnum (one son, one daughter); died London 18 September 1997.

When Roger Hardisty was appointed to Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1958 the death rate from childhood leukaemia was 100 per cent. By the time he retired, up to 70 per cent of afflicted children were surviving apparently cured.

This major advance was also due, certainly, to work in other centres, both national and international, but, as the first specialist to be solely concerned with paediatric haemato-

logy in Britain, Hardisty's role was pivotal. His other areas of research into how the blood clots, was fundamental and equally productive, with the new knowledge applied to running a world-famous treatment centre for haemophilia and other clotting disorders.

Apart from his National Service in the Army, Hardisty's early medical life was centred on St Thomas' Hospital. Like most London teaching hospitals then, this had its stuffy establishment consultants who saw their only responsibility as patient care at the hospital and in Harley Street. But, unlike many medical schools, St Thomas' had a large body of exceptionally gifted academic doctors committed to research and teaching as well. In the heady intellectual atmosphere of the post-war period the output of new and important results was

unique for a British undergraduate hospital. Unusually, moreover, the research was heavily based on the laboratory and, even more unusually, at St Thomas' such doctors were not second-class ancillaries but clinicians expected to see patients in the wards.

Appointed to Great Ormond Street after a short period at Cardiff, Hardisty brought this unique approach with him. Once established, strong individual departments were given formal academic status, so that in 1969 Hardisty became the first professor of paediatric haematology in Britain.

The hospital was a referral centre not only for Britain but also for abroad, and the treatment of leukaemia was a significant problem. Research was indicating that remissions could sometimes be obtained using drugs such as steroids and the

"antimetabolites". Nevertheless, after a few weeks or months the leukaemia invariably relapsed, and, though occasionally a second remission might be obtained, inevitably it returned and the child died.

In the early 1960s the suggestion arose that giving the drugs together or in succession might produce longer remissions - and that carefully controlled schedules in expert centres might eventually produce cures. In retrospect such trials sound straightforward; at the time they were anything but easy. The toxic effects of the drugs added to the miseries of the disease, and even when the leukaemia had been absent for some months it might suddenly return, say, as a lump in the testicle or ovary, or as leukaemia meningitis (which Roger Hardisty was the first to identify).

These recurrences de-

manded surgical operation or radiotherapy, but some consultants refused to allow their patients to have such major procedures. Given the then inevitable lethal outcome of leukaemia, treatment might be worse than the disease; humane terminal care was thought to be paramount.

Similarly, in the heroic surgery starting around that time, particularly organ transplantation, the results were dismaying. Many now speak of the surgeons who persisted to success as having the "courage to fail". No less courage was shown by those haematologists who persisted in treating childhood and other leukaemias. Among these, Hardisty (as human as anybody, giving his home telephone number to worried parents) was the foremost in Britain.

Showing that the rarer

forms of childhood leukaemia behave differently from the commoner "lymphoblastic" variety, as secretary and then chairman of the Medical Research Council's working party on leukaemia in childhood he was rewarded when a trial disclosed that no fewer than 70 per cent of children with the latter had survived. Another reward was a secretly organised tea party for his retirement, in the boardroom of Great Ormond Street, attended by his many survivors from leukaemia.

Roger Hardisty was an exceptionally modest man (figuring in neither *Who's Who* nor the Honours List, though the French government made him a Chevalier de l'Ordre National du Mérite). He shunned merely adding his name to research papers but delighted in transmuting those written by colleagues into pell-mell prose.

He was the co-author of two notable books, *Bleeding Disorders: investigation and management* (1965) and *Blood and its Disorders* (1974).

He was an outstanding editor of the *British Journal of Haematology*, and among the contributions to one multi-author textbook his required no alterations at all.

Apart from photography (at which he excelled) his outside interests were mainly intellectual (as befitting somebody who could give medical seminars in French or Danish). These - whether reading, listening to music, or going to the theatre - were reflected in his Hampstead home, where he and his Danish wife, Lyte, created a relaxed and cosy mixture of books, pictures, and antique and modern furniture.

Nor was the company at the frequent dinner parties exclusively medical; the conversation

over the food and carefully chosen wine would be livened by an economist, a music critic, or a botanist. And if, during his final illness with stomach cancer, he had been asked to look on the bright side, he would probably have remarked wryly that at least he wouldn't have to experience the full awfulness of John Birt's future BBC.

- Stephen Lock



Hardisty: modest

over the food and carefully chosen wine would be livened by an economist, a music critic, or a botanist. And if, during his final illness with stomach cancer, he had been asked to look on the bright side, he would probably have remarked wryly that at least he wouldn't have to experience the full awfulness of John Birt's future BBC.

- Stephen Lock

### DEATHS

TURINE: Kenneth Vavas (Ken), aged 81. After a long illness bravely borne, Ken died at home on 22 September, with Kate beside him. A much-loved husband, son, brother, uncle and friend, he will be sadly missed. The funeral will be held at St Peter's Church, 100, St Peter's Hill, Willesden, on 26 September at 11.30am, followed by committal at Macclesfield Crematorium at 12.30pm. Family flowers only, but donations may be made in Ken's memory to the Royal Marsden, Lung Cancer Research Fund, Lung Cancer Research Fund, 100, St Peter's Hill, Willesden, London NW10 7HT, or to the Royal Marsden, Lung Cancer Research Fund, 100, St Peter's Hill, Willesden, London NW10 7HT.

WOODS: S. John, painter and graphic designer, 21 November 1915-22 September 1997. Very much loved and missed. Funeral at Barham Crematorium, Friday 26 September 1997, 1.30pm.

ANNOUNCEMENTS for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorials)

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### BIRTHDAYS

Ms Charlotte Atkins MP, 47; Miss Svetlana Berkova, former ballerina, 65; Sir Mervyn Brown, former diplomat, 74; Professor Geoffrey Burbridge, astronomer, 72; Professor Terence Burrow, Research Fellow of the University of Western Ontario, 66; Mr Michael Cawelti, former Secretary-General, Magdalen College, Oxford, 74; Sir Seymour Egerton, former chairman, Courts Bank, 82; Mr Brian Glavinville, writer and journalist, 66; Vice-Admiral Sir Alan Gross, 60; Professor Richard Hoggart, writer and former Warden of Goldsmiths' College, London, 79; Mrs Catherine Hughes, former Principal, Somerville College, Oxford, 74; Professor Robert Jacob, MP, 62; David Lane, former editor of the *Times*, 70; Professor Racial Equality, 75; Robert Lang, actor and director,

## One member, one vote: your party depends on it, Mr Hague



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### Dates and the DTI

Sir: Your article, "Redwood calls for 'timebomb' action" (23 September) contains several inaccuracies.

The Department of Trade ministers are committed to helping British industry solve the century date problem. The DTI has been at the forefront of awareness-raising activities and is now working on helping businesses turn awareness into action. Industry and not the taxpayer must bear the cost of putting their own systems right.

However, the Government does have a role. That is why this Government has funded Taskforce 2000 and why I hosted a millennium skills summit with industry leaders.

The Government has been rightly praised by our European partners for our approach to this problem. We are much further ahead at a European level in taking action both in the private and public sectors. I am currently looking at new ways in which the Government can step up the campaign to galvanise industry into action.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is, and always has been, responsible for coordinating work within government departments themselves on this issue. The DTI will continue to work with the private sector and any suggestions that we are looking to pass this on to the Cabinet Office are totally absurd.

Mr Redwood is correct on one point – action must be taken now to ensure all computer systems work smoothly at the beginning of the year 2000. I hope he will join with me in urging businesses to face up to their responsibilities. We in Government are facing up to ours.

BARBARA ROCHE MP

Minister for Industry

The Department of Trade  
and Industry  
London SW1

Sir: Professor Milton (letter, 22 September) has not fully understood the nature and implications of the Year 2000 computer problem. The 450,000 requested by Taskforce 2000 was not intended to fix the problem, but to raise public awareness. The true cost of fixing will run into billions of pounds and will have to be borne by companies and other organisations, including the government, who have



programs that rely on just two digits for the year.

For most large systems, this is an application software problem. The computers themselves will handle the date change – it's just the programs that will fail; potential financial loss if you run a business, potentially life-threatening in a hospital or air traffic control.

For smaller computers, such as PCs, the position is uncertain. Professor Milton may believe his computer has four digits in the date, but he would be wise to see if he can set the date to 31/12/1999 23:59 and let it tick over to the next day.

If successful, he will then need to check through all his applications that use dates. I hope he does not feel compelled to see his supplier, but I wouldn't bet on it.

JOHN RICHARDS  
R-cube Systems Ltd, Bath

### Human rights paper

Sir: Donald MacIntyre is right to suggest that the forthcoming White Paper on incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights into UK law raises constitutional questions ("Can we trust the judges to make our laws?", 19 September). We, as human rights NGOs and institutes, feel the courts must be provided with adequate remedies for breaches of the convention. In this case, judges must first be required to interpret all Acts in line with the convention to the extent that they can do so. Where this proves impossible, the courts must have the power to make a declaration to that effect – that primary legislation is, in their view, in breach of the convention. Together with new and effective scrutiny mechanisms in Whitehall and Parliament this should ensure that new legislation is subject to thorough human rights review.

First, courts must be able to interpret existing law in line with the convention and to "read in" convention rights. If this is not possible, the usual role of the implied repeal of an existing statute by a later statute must apply and the rights in the convention must be given preference over the old law. Should Parliament then take a

different view from the courts on the appropriate balance between conflicting rights, or between individual rights and the "common good", it could of course amend the law, if necessary, re-establishing it as it was before.

Second, it is likely that government proposals will not allow statutes passed after the convention has been incorporated to be overruled by the courts. In this case, judges must first be required to interpret all Acts in line with the convention to the extent that they can do so. Where this proves impossible, the courts must have the power to make a declaration to that effect – that primary legislation is, in their view, in breach of the convention. Together with new and effective scrutiny mechanisms in Whitehall and Parliament this should ensure that new legislation is subject to thorough human rights review.

Third, following such judicial declarations, a mechanism must be found to give priority to amending the offending legislation. If the Government fails to act, or disagrees with the court's ruling, the case can of course be taken to the Strasbourg court for judgment, and there will have to be consideration of the appropriate compensation or other remedies if a violation is found.

Finally, under any model of incorporation the establishment of a Human Rights Commission is crucial.

FRANCESCA KLUG, Human Rights Incorporation Project  
NIK NICOL, The Public Law Project  
ANNE OWERS, Justice  
ANDREW PUDDLEPHATT, Charter 88  
SARAH SPENCER, the Institute for Public Policy Research  
JOHN WADHAM, Liberty  
London SE1

### Anti-malarial drug

Sir: Further to your article "Anti-malarial drug that gave minister sleepless nights" (19 September), I would strongly endorse the warnings it contains. In May, on a working holiday in Malawi, where more dangerous strains of the disease are on the increase again, I suffered exactly the same effects from Lariam. Disturbed sleep patterns were followed by violent dreams.

Because of the alteration in malaria incidence, many long-stay expatriates have given up taking any medication, and malarial bouts are therefore frequent – and the cycle of transmission gets worse. Many told me that it was very dangerous for backpackers on their own to use Lariam. The onset of depression in a strange exotic country far from home could lead to suicidal tendencies.

Canon G H SMITH  
Kidderminster, Worcestershire  
London SE1

### Hackney schools

Sir: I must give an alternative viewpoint to that expressed by Gabriel Thompson ("Confessions of a disillusioned parent", 19 September) in which he explains why he feels justified in taking his step-daughters out of a state school in Hackney.

My children attend William Paix School, in the heart of Hackney, and I have nothing but praise both for the school and for the head. It must be hard work when some 50 per cent of the children do not have English as a first language but still the children are encouraged and extended.

Of course, the local education authority may be in need of some changes but please do not lay the blame at the schools themselves. They are doing the best they can.

P.D. TAPPER  
Kidderminster, Worcestershire  
London N16

### Who are you

Sir: William Hague is wrong to say that the referendum "split" Wales "down the middle" (re-port, 20 September).

What the result of the referendum shows is that Wales was already split. For a multiplicity of reasons – ranging from the Anglo-Norman settlement of the border lands and the coastal plains, to the industrialisation of the southern valleys and the sheer difficulty of communication in such a mountainous terrain – Wales has long been divided between the Welsh-speaking west and north and the anglicised south and east.

What is remarkable is that, in a country which has been under English control for seven centuries, so many still have the vision and enough sense of Welshness to vote for an assembly. This assembly will give to Wales for the first time a forum for representatives from all parts of the country to share ideas and work together to bring greater harmony, confidence and prosperity to all the people of Wales.

B. GRODEKA' LEWIS  
Wells, Somerset

## Fry's Oscar, Mailer's Jesus, the Lazy River Café, and other future best-sellers



MILES  
KINGTON

The contenders for the Christmas book-seller list are already edging their way into the bookshops, and as a service to readers I am bringing you a first selection of the hottest new candidates on the bookshelves.

Oscar and I by Stephen Fry (Scribner Press, £19.99)

Oscar Wilde was in the middle of the most successful run of his life when suddenly he went missing for a couple of years. Where had he gone? Well, Reading Gaol, as it turns out. Stephen Fry is well equipped to understand Wilde's prison experience, as he, too, went to public school, and he now tells the story of himself and Oscar Wilde – or is it a very clever novel about something else entirely different? Hard to tell, but fun to try.

The Pontypridd Unarmed Combat Book (Welsh RFU Paperback, £5.99)

A useful guide to self-defence for the

ordinary rugby player who is quietly mind-ing his own business when he is suddenly set upon by someone whose face he has just stamped on. Video replays of many rugby flare-ups show that although many rugby forwards know how to swing a punch, they haven't the faintest idea how to land one and make the other man fall over. This book tells you how.

The Old Man River Café Cookbook (The River Café Recycling Press, £15.99)

A mouth-watering selection of regional Italian dishes from the US's deep South.

Jesus Christ: The Glory Years by Norman Mailer (Routledge and Leaver, £19.99)

This is Norman Mailer's much-acclaimed life of Jesus, told in terms of a heavyweight boxing career, looking at Jesus's high-flying years when he was simply unbeatable, and his sudden fall from grace when he came up against new

Roman regulations which he simply couldn't come to terms with.

"I have always believed that a man's got to do what a man's gotta do," growls Mailer, "so I also believe that the Son of Man's gotta do what the Son of Man's gotta do. That's what the book's about. Read it if you don't believe me, wise guy."

Up the Lazy River Café Cookbook (The River Café Recycling Press, £15.99)

A mouth-watering selection of regional Italian dishes which don't take any time or energy.

The Pre-Shrunk Génie by Richard Dorking (Airport Philosophy Press, £29.99)

Richard Dorking, acclaimed author of *The Blind Piano Tuner*, *The Drunken Car Mechanic*, *Knock Three Times If You're God And No, I'm Sorry, You're Confusing Me With Stephen Hawking – He's Someone Else* has now come up with the amazing theory that

some of us have a gene which predisposes us to write long books explaining the nature of the world, and of human behaviour as well, if there is space. He also theorises that most of the rest of us have a gene which predisposes us to buy such books, but not, extraordinarily, to read them.

The Man Who Thought Princess Diana Was a Saima by Oliver Sax (Humdrum Books, £29.99)

A man walked into Oliver Sax's office one day convinced that Princess Diana was a saint. What was odd about this was that he was the 35,000th person he had met that day who believed it. The more Oliver Sax studied the case, the more he came to believe that there was a best-selling book in there somewhere. This is it.

Walking Round The World Backwards by Michael Palin (BBC Xmas Books, £25.99)

A mouthwatering selection of southern Italian recipes taken from well-known song titles.

oldest nice man," says Michael Palin.

"Oh yes you do," says the BBC, "now off you go again."

"Oh, OK," says Michael Palin.

This is the book of what happened next.

A Portrait of John Major by Norman Lamont (Nostalgia Press, £3.99)

Hard on the heels of John Major's disappearance from the scene comes this book about him – but all the pages are completely blank. Is this a printer's error? A joke? A post-modernist kind of biography? A rather nice blank jutting pad? Hard to tell. Others in this series include *A Portrait of William Hague*, *A Portrait of John Redwood*, *A Portrait of Stephen Dorrell*, etc.

The Moon River Café Cookbook (The River Café Recycling Press, £15.99)

A mouthwatering selection of southern Italian recipes taken from well-known song titles.

ague  
**When politics takes its orders from commerce**

**HAMISH MCRAE**  
ON WORLD MARKETS AND HARD TRUTHS

A few years back, when the *Sunday Times* wrote something disagreeable about Mahathir bin Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, the owner of the newspaper, Rupert Murdoch, rushed to downplay any criticism, and the editor swiftly found himself moved to another job. Now, when Dr Mahathir attacks the activities of the financier George Soros for speculating against South-east Asian currencies, and says that currency traders should be shot, Mr Soros replies in kind, calling him "a menace to his own country" and "a loose canon" who should not be taken seriously.

You could, I suppose, simply conclude that the pen is less mighty than the wallet; or maybe just that Mr Soros has an *élan* which Mr Murdoch lacks.

There is certainly some irony in the whole spar, for Malaysia stood alongside Mr Soros at the forefront of the speculation against sterling when the pound was ejected from the ERM back in 1992.

But, of course, there is also a serious story here: a story that tells us about the way power is devolving in the world, and the way in which politicians can respond to that shift, shaping it to help them achieve their authority?

We are seeing that evolve here in Britain. The first rule is to deliver competence: competent macroeconomic management, but also competent management of public services, fine-tuning them so that scarce taxpayer money is used to best effect.

But new politics has to go far beyond that. Politicians cannot command and control; at least, they can command and control only their own people, not the rest of us. Instead politicians will have to behave like entrepreneurs, taking ideas and selling them to other people who can help them make them work.

One of the really fascinating features of this government is the way in which a string of people from the business community have become involved with government projects. Take the Millennium Dome: it is not being funded directly by government, for most of the money will come from the lottery, entry fees and sponsorship. Yet Peter Mandelson is personally orchestrating the commercial and artistic talent that is needed if the thing is to be a success.

In a few years' time this will over the role of speculators will seem terribly old-fashioned. Governments the world over will have come to live with the fact that there is a global capital market and that it is not very difficult to accept the rules of that game – just as they are gradually learning that they have to accept the rules of democracy. But to push ahead, to be really effective, they will have to learn to deploy a new set of skills, including charm. I have met Mr Soros only once, but he seemed to me to be the sort of chap who took himself rather seriously. My tip for Dr Mahathir is this: Try flattery; it is more likely to be effective than saying that currency speculators ought to be shot.

You can even catch an element of hostility towards the City of London – that it has somehow been undermining British industry – here in Britain. If it is possible to demonise your own people on your own doorstep, how much easier it is when they are foreigners thousands of miles away.

Still, Dr Mahathir's intransigence came as a surprise, and not just to Mr Soros. It came as a surprise because Malaysia had become something of a darling among international investors. It was growing very fast. It seemed to be politically stable. It had a "can do" spirit in the government, which was not only backing enormous investment pro-

jects, such as the world's tallest buildings, a new airport and a gigantic dam, but also did not seem to be too bothered with any opposition to its ambition. People in the world markets thought they had a government that understood the rules of the capitalist game.

Clearly, they were wrong. In fact the Malaysian government thought that the markets wanted the orders associated with these large projects, and not much else. Actually, the markets want secure and sustainable economic growth that will bring a good return on investments. Malaysia thought that the new world of global capitalism was the world of Mr Murdoch, when in fact it was more the world of Mr Soros.

Business and finance are crucially different. Of course, there is an element of the commercial world that coddles up to politicians to gain access to markets, a contract for a dam or a licence to drill for oil. But people in the financial markets are in general much more antiseptic in their appraisal. They want the ability to get their money in, but more especially the ability to get their money out. Hedging against currency and interest rates risks are absolutely essential to their calculations.

So when politicians talk about capital controls, or fulminate against international currency movements, investors are liable to rush for the door. The wisest of these international investors (sadly, by no means all) do also concern themselves with issues such as the environmental implications of projects, and the level of corruption in the government. But the one mantra to which they all subscribe – whether wise or foolish, sophisticated or thick – is freedom of capital movement. So the recent response of the Malaysian government to a regional economic crisis has been pretty much a classic case of how not to manage a government's relationship with the new barony of power.

That is the negative message: how not to do it. What about the positive one: what should politicians do to gear up their own authority?

We are seeing that evolve here in Britain. The first rule is to deliver competence: competent macroeconomic management, but also competent management of public services, fine-tuning them so that scarce taxpayer money is used to best effect.

But new politics has to go far beyond that. Politicians cannot command and control; at least, they can command and control only their own people, not the rest of us. Instead politicians will have to behave like entrepreneurs, taking ideas and selling them to other people who can help them make them work.

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BBC bosses are reportedly unhappy about paying David Jason £250,000 an episode for his latest series, while Jennifer Aniston thinks her salary is 'insane'. But is that what they're worth?

Photographs: BBC/Capital

## We are all equal ... in fooling ourselves that we believe in equality



**ANDREW MARR**  
THE RULING HYPOCRISY

One of the ways any society is judged and remembered is how it deals with its ruling hypocrisy. We think of Victorian repression and prostitution, or of the co-existence of Enlightenment rhetoric and slavery at 19th-century America; or of the fear and brutalisation brought by Marxist governments preaching freedom. All societies have some key hypocrisies. Generally it is like proclaiming your atheism in medieval Spain.

And yet, clearly, we don't really believe it. We use salary and capital to value people and we value them at staggeringly different levels. Everywhere, it seems, the gap between the starry tops and the rest is growing.

Paul Johnson of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, which produced a report on inequality during the summer, pointed out that 10 per cent of the population now has as much income as the poorer 50 per cent of households. "The increase in inequality is probably the biggest social change that we have experienced in the past 20 years," he said. And, Johnson added, it is here to stay.

A Labour Party which was once firmly egalitarian in its creed rules a Britain that is profoundly unequal and growing more so – and Labour neither can nor wants to do anything about it.

Ministers defend the big fees paid to the top people who advise the Government on everything from the millennium to poverty. They explain just why top doctors command re-

ally big salaries. (Answer: many of their clever friends are richer still.) They get into a mess about their own salaries. But the one-time would-be redistributors of wealth have become advocates for inequality.

So racism became steadily less popular. The post-war victors identified themselves as democracies, first and foremost, and developed mass cultures based on the "little guy" as hero. Traditional class structures, from the American Deep South to the Home Counties, began to crumble. Homophobia crept slowly after racism into the closet. Chat-show sermonising rammed home the unchallengeable lesson: we are all-of-equal-value. To deny it is like proclaiming your atheism in medieval Spain.

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Ministers defend the big fees paid to the top people who advise the Government on everything from the millennium to poverty. They explain just why top doctors command re-

ation for this is obvious and well understood. But isn't it at least odd that a society committed to political and legal equality and an almost unchallenged belief in the equal moral value of human lives is also so vigorously and enthusiastically unequal in valuing and rewarding the people who live those lives?

For the remaining social democrats, such as Roy Hattersley, this is the sadness and shame at the heart of Tony Blair's bright and shiny new Britain. Yet social democracy, as a political project, seems dead. There are too many haves or might-haves, with too little interest in the haven's. Are we condemned to be a generation of social hypocrisies, prattling post-war pieties and doing the opposite?

One answer is perhaps to look again at hypocrisy itself. In most cases the ruling social hypocrisy had a purpose. It wasn't an embarrassing afterthought.

The Victorians may have been buttoned-up and repressive. But the self-discipline and greater conformism was essential to one of the world's first mass middle-class societies, which had set itself so many hard administrative and industrial tasks. Education, the economic cohesion of strong families and saving were vital to the Victorians' new society. It couldn't afford the more riotous and less inhibited moves of the 18th century. So – hypocrisy? Yes, but necessary.

Similarly, America, even in the slave era, needed the political myth of a society of free equals, as it sucked in Western immigrants and thrust them West to survive or die. And Marxist regimes would have crumbled immediately without the propagandistic promise of a better tomorrow, and history on your side.

In our case, with a boom market in particular skills and professions, and a growing underclass, the assertions that "this is a democracy, after all" and "we are worth the same" seem increasingly threadbare.

We don't believe in equality after all.

But perhaps it is important that we still believe we believe in equality. In the end, ours is a poignant and optimistic hypocrisy, rather than a malign one. It is a constant and humane protest at the huge disparities in wealth and opportunity which our economic system produces along with general rising living standards.

Without that residual human protest, our remaining political protections would fall away. Our necessary optimism – the optimism that provides our energy as a country – would fail.

But a Martian, or a Victorian, would call us hypocrites, even so.

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## Business chiefs turn heat on Blair over sterling and EMU

Senior industrialists will today tell Tony Blair that business is being hurt by the strength of sterling and the lack of commitment to entering a single currency when they attend a working breakfast in Downing Street. In return, the Prime Minister will tell his guests that he wants to see more job swaps between business and Whitehall. Michael Harrison reports.

Jobs, investment and profits are all being undermined by the rise in the value of the pound, according to businessmen invited to this morning's breakfast briefing at Number

10. Among the 17 industrialists attending are the chief executives of some of Britain's largest inward investors who are also anxious to see the Government commit itself to economic and monetary union even if the pound does not join the first wave in 1999.

Others present will include the chairmen of several large firms that have issued profit warnings because of the strength of sterling. One of those attending, Dr Walter Hasselkus, the chairman and chief executive of the Rover car group, said it would have to review its purchasing arrangements and export plans if the pound remained at its current levels of DM2.87.

Rover, now owned by the German car maker BMW, spends £4bn a year on components of which 85 per cent is sourced in

Britain. In addition, it is Britain's biggest car exporter and expects overseas sales of the new small Land-Rover, the Freelander, to contribute £1bn to the balance of payments when full production is reached.

"At the end of the day we have a responsibility to make Rover a profitable business and the strength of the pound does not help that," said Dr Hasselkus.

He added that if the Government were to give a firm commitment to EMU then that might ease the situation by bringing sterling down to a more manageable and competitive exchange rate in the region of DM2.30 to DM2.40.

The meeting is also being attended by Jürgen Gehrels, chief executive of Siemens UK which is investing £1bn in a microchip plant in the North-east. Mr Gehrels, one

of the most prominent supporters of EMU, and has said that Siemens might not have taken the decision to invest so heavily had it known at the time that the UK might not join a single currency.

Among those attending from companies hit by sterling's strength are Sir Ronnie Hampel, chairman of ICI, which estimates the strong pound will knock £90m from profits this year, and Tony Greener, chairman of Guinness, which puts exchange rate losses at £50m this year and a further £60m in 1998.

Ian Gibson, chief executive of Nissan Motor Manufacturing, which will also see its profit recovery held in check this year by sterling, is another of the business chiefs attending. Nissan exports about 70 per cent of the cars made at its Sunderland plant.

Mr Blair will respond to the indus-

trialists by telling them he wants more high-flyers from business to swap between jobs in the Civil Service and industry. At present, job swaps only take place at Civil Service grade 5 and above, but Mr Blair wants to extend the arrangement to cover lower grades and make the appointments for shorter periods. The meeting is the first in a series of working breakfasts. Other sessions are planned covering the retail sector, the City and finance and small business.

In her first speech on manufacturing since taking office, Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, last night pledged to help revitalise Britain's manufacturing base by encouraging exports and supporting a campaign to benchmark UK companies against overseas competi-

tors and providing a stable economic framework. But she gave no promises on exchange rates or EMU.

However, John Redwood, her Conservative shadow, attacked Mrs Beckett for failing Britain's exporters, saying the Department of Trade and Industry had a lamentable record on dealing with export licences and competition inquiries. He urged her to hurry up and make a decision on the P&O-Stena, ferry merger, about which Mrs Beckett held talks yesterday with the European Union Competition Commissioner, Karel Van Miert.

The talks also covered the British Airways-American Airlines alliance. A DTI spokesman said the meeting had been "constructive" but would not say whether either deal was nearer to being cleared.

## Cruickshank to quit as Oftel chief

Don Cruickshank, the telephones regulator, yesterday surprised the industry by revealing that he did not want to continue in the job when his contract expires next spring. As Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, explains the announcement follows calls by Mr Cruickshank for a radical overhaul of the regulatory system, including replacing individual regulators with commissions.

Mr Cruickshank had been expected to extend his outspoken reign at Oftel, the telecommunications watchdog, when his five-year contract finished at the end of March. But he announced that he had decided as early as last Christmas to look for a new job in the private sector and had told the new government the news on 8 May. "Five years was long enough for me," he said.

Insisting that money was not a factor in his decision, he admitted he would probably improve on his current pay package in a private sector post. Last year Mr Cruickshank earned £126,400. One option was a new job with a communications company.

Mr Cruickshank denied suggestions of any rift with Labour. "There's absolutely no falling out between me and the Government over matters of policy. This is me personally taking a view of what I wanted to do." Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, said he had made a "major contribution" to developing the regulatory regime in a complex and fast-moving industry. The Department of Trade and Industry is considering his recent proposal to replace individual regulators with commissions in its review of utility regulation. Oftel argued this would speed-up decision-making by making regulators less isolated. But Mr Cruickshank has consistently refused to back suggested moves to merge Oftel with the Independent Television Commission to form a single communications regulator.

James Dodd, a telecoms analyst with Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, said the departure would put Labour's telecommunications policy under closer scrutiny. "It was generally perceived that BT was likely to be more at home under Labour. We'll have to see whether his successor is any more accommodating to BT's domestic ambitions."

Mr Cruickshank joined Oftel after the turbulent nine-year tenure of Sir Bryan Cunliffe. A former senior executive with the Pearson media empire, Mr Cruickshank was managing director of Richard Branson's Virgin empire between 1984 and 1989. He later had spells as head of Wandsworth Health Authority and of the Scottish National Health Service.

His time at Oftel saw continual skirmishes with BT as the domestic phone market opened to competition, culminating in last year's bitter battle over price controls which resulted in new powers for the regulator to ban anti-competitive behaviour.

Rover rolls out a revamped image in corporate makeover

Rover yesterday unveiled its first corporate makeover in 10 years. Dr Walter Hasselkus, chairman, said the new logo and corporate image was designed to project Rover's Britishness, heritage, creativity and exploring spirit. He described the new corporate identity as "elegant, confident and sophisticated."

There had not been anything wrong with the old corporate identity, he said, except that after six changes of name in 20 years



Rover Group's new corporate logo, unveiled yesterday

from Leyland Motors to BMC to British Leyland, to BL, to Austin Rover and onto Rover, the company's image needed to be refined.

The four royal warrants that Rover uses will be replaced with just one and the individual marques - Rover Cars, MG, Land-Rover and Mini will be projected separately from the corporate identity.

## Power companies warn of chaos

Electricity companies yesterday raised new fears of consumer chaos when the power market is opened to domestic competition next year. But after his second meeting with heads of the companies, John Battle, the industry minister, insisted that competition could still begin on time. Chris Godsmark reports.

Mr Battle admitted there were problems with competition which needed to be sorted out urgently, but he denied that the situation had deteriorated so far that the whole process should be delayed. It envisages phasing the start of domestic competition between April and September, with London Electricity, East Midlands Electricity and Southern Electric the last companies to open up their regions.

"Every company has signed

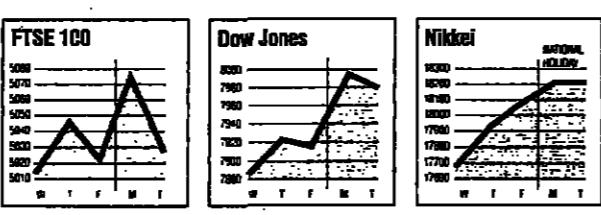
up to the process. It can be achieved and I'm still confident we're on target for the original timetable," said Mr Battle. But he said some difficulties with testing of the complex computer systems, due to start from next month, had still to be resolved.

Power companies yesterday issued their strongest warnings yet about the potential for customer chaos, as households switch to different suppliers. One electricity group, which did not want to be named, said the whole process was "a shambles". It added: "This has the capacity to be a major disaster. It's just not going to happen and it's now inevitable that Battle will have to seriously consider a six to nine-month delay."

Some suppliers are understood to have criticised PA Consulting, the group acting as project manager for competition. One supplier suggested PA's most recent report, published last week, had misled ministers and Professor Stephen Littlechild, the regulator, about the seriousness of the problems.

Outlook, page 25

### STOCK MARKETS



Dow Jones index and graph in \$ps

Indices

Index Close Change Change(%) 52 wk high 52 wk low Yield(%)

FTSE 100 5027.50 -49.20 -0.95 5086.80 3900.40 3.49

FTSE 250 4709.90 2.70 0.06 4729.40 4548.10 3.50

FTSE 350 2420.10 -16.50 -0.76 2438.60 1940.20 3.48

FTSE All Share 2384.85 -16.66 -0.70 2381.51 1823.79 3.47

FTSE SmallCap 2300.0 3.20 0.14 2374.20 2128.40 3.24

FTSE MidCap 1274.4 1.84 0.14 1346.50 1196.70 3.28

FTSE AIM 1017.2 1.10 0.11 1026.00 1002.10 3.95

Dow Jones 7201.14 30.69 -0.43 7262.00 6595.65 3.97

1000 1200 1600 2000 2400 2800 3200 3600 4000 4400 4800 5200 5600 6000 6400 6800 7200 7600 8000 8400 8800 9200 9600 10000 10400 10800 11200 11600 12000 12400 12800 13200 13600 14000 14400 14800 15200 15600 16000 16400 16800 17200 17600 18000 18400 18800 19200 19600 20000 20400 20800 21200 21600 22000 22400 22800 23200 23600 24000 24400 24800 25200 25600 26000 26400 26800 27200 27600 28000 28400 28800 29200 29600 30000 30400 30800 31200 31600 32000 32400 32800 33200 33600 34000 34400 34800 35200 35600 36000 36400 36800 37200 37600 38000 38400 38800 39200 39600 40000 40400 40800 41200 41600 42000 42400 42800 43200 43600 44000 44400 44800 45200 45600 46000 46400 46800 47200 47600 48000 48400 48800 49200 49600 50000 50400 50800 51200 51600 52000 52400 52800 53200 53600 54000 54400 54800 55200 55600 56000 56400 56800 57200 57600 58000 58400 58800 59200 59600 51000 51500 52000 52500 53000 53500 54000 54500 55000 55500 56000 56500 57000 57500 58000 58500 59000 59500 60000 60500 61000 61500 62000 62500 63000 63500 64000 64500 65000 65500 66000 66500 67000 67500 68000 68500 69000 69500 70000 70500 71000 71500 72000 72500 73000 73500 74000 74500 75000 75500 76000 76500 77000 77500 78000 78500 79000 79500 80000 80500 81000 81500 82000 82500 83000 83500 84000 84500 85000 85500 86000 86500 87000 87500 88000 88500 89000 89500 90000 90500 91000 91500 92000 92500 93000 93500 94000 94500 95000 95500 96000 96500 97000 97500 98000 98500 99000 99500 100000 100500 101000 101500 102000 102500 103000 103500 104000 104500 105000 105500 106000 106500 107000 107500 108000 108500 109000 109500 110000 110500 111000 111500 112000 112500 113000 113500 114000 114500 115000 115500 116000 116500 117000 117500 118000 118500 119000 119500 120000 120500 121000 121500 122000 122500 123000 123500 124000 124500 125000 125500 126000 126500 127000 127500 128000 128500 129000 129500 130000 130500 131000 131500 132000 132500 133000 133500 134000 134500 135000 135500 136000 136500 137000 137500 138000 138500 139000 139500 140000 140500 141000 141500 142000 142500 143000 143500 144000 144500 145000 145500 146000 146500 147000 147500 148000 148500 149000 149500 150000 150500 151000 151500 152000 152500 153000 153500 154000 154500 155000 155500 156000 156500 157000 157500 158000 158500 159000 159500 160000 160500 161000 161500 162000 162500 163000 163500 164000 164500 165000 165500 166000 166500 167000 167500 168000 168500 169000 169500 170000 170500 171000 171500 172000 172500 173000 173500 174000 174500 175000 175500 176000 176500 177000 177500 178000 178500 179000 179500 180000 180500 181000 181500 182000 182500 183000 183500 184000 184500 185000 185500 186000 186500 187000 187500 188000 188500 189000 189500 190000 190500 191000 191500 192000 192500 193000 193500 194000 194500 195000 195500 196000 196500 197000 197500 198000 198500 199000 199500 200000 200500 201000 201500 202000 202500 203000 203500 204000 204500 205000 205500 206000 206500 207000 207500 208000 208500 209000 209500 210000 210500 211000 211500 212000 212500 213000 213500 214000 214500 215000 215500 216000 216500 217000 217500 218000 218500 219000 219500 220000 220500 221000 221500 222000 222500 223000 223500 224000 224500 225000 225500 226000 226500 227000 227500 228000 228500 229000 229500 230000 230500 231000 231500 232000 232500 233000 233500 234000 234500 235000 235500 236000 236500 237000 237500 238000 238500 239000



## Battling it out over electricity competition

**OUTLOOK  
ON ELECTRICITY  
COMPETITION,  
DON CRUICKSHANK  
AND MARKET  
INDICES**

If they pulled the plug on electricity deregulation, would anyone care? Worse, would anyone notice? The grand scheme to open the domestic power market to competition next spring becomes more shamless by the day. If anybody is in charge, they are not owning up to it. If anybody, other than the existing regional electricity companies and the two Scottish suppliers, is contemplating joining the competitive market, they are not making their interest known. If anybody can put hand on heart and say exactly how much the whole exercise will cost and how much it will mean off electricity bills, they have not yet entered into the light of day.

John Battle, who rashly promised that the buck would stop with him and has been backpedalling fast ever since, says he is confident that the April deadline will be met and that there is no need for a delay. This looks like hopeful thinking almost to the point of naivety. Only four of the 14 suppliers, on present estimates, will be ready on time. Can't do it, won't do it, the RECs are saying.

The auditors to the Electricity Pool, Coopers & Lybrand, say we are heading for disaster (though with their other management consultancy hat on they say it will, surprise, surprise, all be a rip roaring success). The major energy users say it will be a shambles. Now the RECs are warning of Armageddon unless the project is delayed until the end of next year. In these circumstances the Government would be wise to delay until the spring of 1999. Nobody in their right minds would pull the switch on the biggest upheaval in the electricity

industry since privatisation when demand and output are at their seasonal high?

The RECs obviously have a vested interest in delaying the onset of competition as long as possible and hanging on to their cosy regional monopolies. On the other hand, there are so few new entrants so far declared that they will barely have to lift a finger to defend their territories when, and if, competition ever goes live.

Lord Simon, for one, must be looking askance at the whole sorry episode. One of the main reasons he was brought into the Government as minister for Europe and competitiveness was to help push through the liberalisation of continental energy markets. If we can't get our own house in order, what right do we have to preach to the rest of Europe?

### Cruickshank's PR offensive

An open letter from Don Cruickshank, director-general of telecommunications, to whom it may concern: "As some of you may have heard, I've decided to quit Ofcom when my contract comes up for renewal next April, by which time I will have spent five grueling years before the mast. I know it seems a bit of cheek to call a fully fledged press conference to announce this, but these things can easily be misinterpreted, and given that I'm going to be looking for jobs in both the private and public sector shortly, I don't want any of that. There's no row here, no snub from the new Gov-

ernment. I wouldn't even get that upset if ministers were to turn down my grand plan for subsuming most of the Independent Television Commission within my own regulatory empire (though they would be stupid to do so).

No, I'm going because I've done all I want to. Economic regulation of telecommunications will soon be a thing of the past and Ofcom will become wholly a competition authority.

This is a considerable achievement in which, I would like to think, I played a not inconsiderable part. Regrets, I've had a few, but then again too few to mention. There's only been one failing since I've been here, and that was the Government's refusal to reverse the burden of proof on regulatory issues, so that British Telecom would have to demonstrate it was not behaving in an anti-competitive way, rather than me having to show that it was before I could do anything. I thought this lot might have been a bit more sympathetic to my approach, but it doesn't seem they are. Instead they talk about forming a "partnership" with BT and other business monopolies. Silly really.

But honest, I haven't fallen out with them. I'm a Blairite type of bloke really and I'd really like to help him out if I could. Which brings me onto more important matters. Under the rules, Nolan or whatever, I'm not allowed actively to start looking for a job until I've gone, and I'm not at all sure I can do anything connected with telecoms even after that. That's why I'm giving good notice of my departure - so that all you head hunters out there are aware that come next April I'm on the market.

Not that I can instruct you of course, but if you were to start looking for me, remotely as it were, I would find that most helpful. As would my fellow regulators. Stephen, at Ofcom, will definitely be on the market shortly. Clare and Ian, at Ofgas and Ofwat, will probably be moving on as well. We've fought our battles, served our time, and we'd all rather like a fresh challenge, you see. Offers in writing only please.

### Why indices can distort the picture

Thanks to HSBC, even retail investors can now buy a derivative instrument which exactly mirrors the performance of the FTSE100. So much easier than buying the underlying stocks. But is the FTSE100 the type of index anyone would want to track?

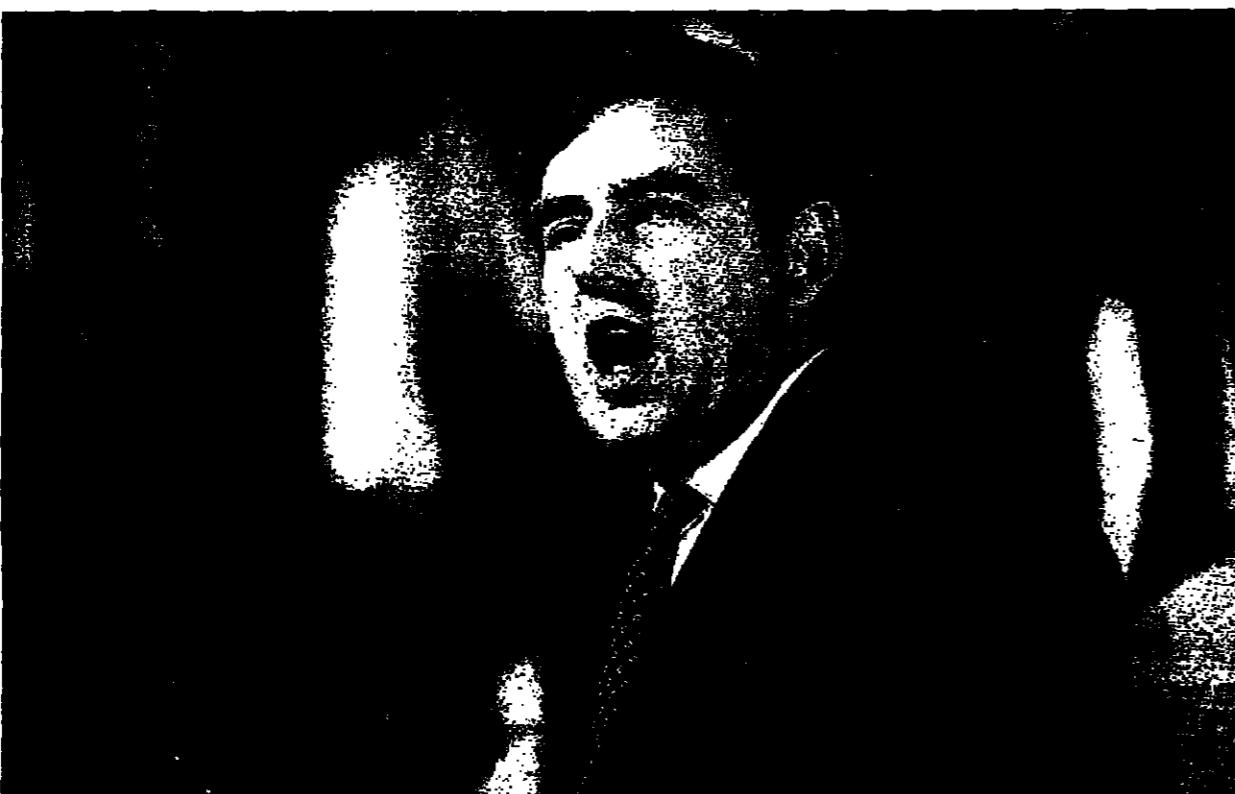
The quarterly reshuffle of the FTSE100 constituents on Monday, which saw three financial stocks enter the top flight while just one financial was pushed out, has continued a trend that has been reducing the apparent meaning of the index for some

time now. Boosted by the summer's wave of demutualisations, the benchmark index has become as much a measure of the health of the financial, oil and pharmaceuticals sectors as the market as a whole.

That has led to some misleading distortions. Over the past year, the FTSE100 has risen by 28 per cent, giving rise to the superficial impression that we are experiencing a stock market boom. It hardly feels that way in the second and lower divisions.

One way of dealing with the problem would be a return to a more subjective measure, such as the old unweighted FT30 basket of stocks, which was chosen with the express aim of giving a representative snapshot of the market as a whole. That would be a mistake.

For all its faults, the FTSE100 does represent a totally objective measure of the country's biggest stocks. It also represents around 70 per cent of the capitalisation of the market as a whole, which gives it a certain significance even if it does not tell the whole story. For that, investors will have to continue looking beyond the headlines to the full range of indices.



In optimistic mood: The Chancellor, Gordon Brown, speaking at the IMF meeting in Hong Kong yesterday

## Brown stresses need for public finance discipline

Gordon Brown yesterday said in an optimistic speech that the Government had taken the right steps to get the economy back on track for steady growth. But, writes Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, the Chancellor stressed that this would depend on maintaining strict discipline on public sector pay.

Giving his first assessment of the British economy since July's Budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, speaking in Hong Kong at the IMF's annual meeting, said: "I am now more optimistic that we are on course to get the economy back on track next year."

But he said that breaking the cycle of boom and bust he had inherited required vigilance on both interest rates and government spending. "There is no room for complacency regarding the public finances," he said.

"We will maintain strict discipline in public spending and I have insisted that, across the board, public sector pay settlements must be guided by fairness and fairness."

Mr Brown said the new framework for interest rates set independently by the Bank of England and the new long-term stability for the public finances would help deliver higher growth in the long run.

"What industry fears most of all is a return to the stop-go instability of the past and the best prospect for industrial investment is to get the economy back on track to sustainable growth with low inflation."

He also emphasised the

need to reform the economy by modernising the welfare state. The tone of Mr Brown's assessment was notable for its contrast with his predecessor's speech at the same event last year.

Although the IMF recently gave the British economy a glowing report, the Chancellor said yesterday: "I will not disguise the problems that we inherited, in particular the strength of consumer demand and the threat of inflation."

He added that the Government had also inherited fundamental long-term challenges in education and welfare.

Despite his cautious tone about British prospects, Mr Brown took the opportunity to remind the other European ministers present that long-term flexibility and adaptability in the workplace was necessary for the creation of jobs.

"We must tackle obstacles to

dynamism," he told them, calling for a European agenda for structural reform. This will be the subject of a special employability conference in London next February.

However, he firmly denied rumours that the Government's approach to the European single currency was about to become more positive. Yesterday he merely reaffirmed the fact that it had started a debate about monetary union.

Speaking separately to the British Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, Eddie George, the Governor of the Bank of England, repeated his concerns about the risks of joining a single currency without genuine economic convergence.

He urged European heads of state, who must decide in May 1998 which countries can join on 1 January 1999, to refuse entry to any which had not met the requirements.

## Short welcomes 'end of monetarism'

The speakers at the formal opening ceremonies of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund meeting all delivered the same message. Unexpectedly, it was that the most pressing challenge for the international community was the reduction of poverty and promotion of equality. Diane Coyle reports from Hong Kong.

"We do not need to look very far to find problems that stand in the way of our objective, namely high-quality growth. By this, I mean growth that is sustainable, that results in a permanent reduction in poverty and greater equality of economic opportunity, and that is respectful of the environment and the rich diversity of national cultures and traditions."

The speaker, addressing the world's finance ministers and central bankers yesterday, was Michel Camdessus, managing director of the IMF and not best known as a friend of the poor and downtrodden.

His speech delighted, among

others, Clare Short, the Secretary of State for International Development.

Speaking to *The Independent* in Hong Kong, she said: "There is an emerging new consensus that sees the interests of the international economy and the interest of reducing poverty as coinciding. It's the end of monetarism."

Ms Short said Mr Camdessus's statement indicated that the IMF would consider withholding loans to governments that were not using the money to reduce poverty and promote social goals like universal primary education.

"It was about putting those

imperatives into a well-functioning market economy. It's wonderful. We've just got to do it now. I do think there's a real possibility of an era of very significant progress," she said.

She added that Britain had enough of a position on the world stage to have an influence. "If we can make any difference I think people in Britain will be proud of their country," Ms Short said.

Mr Camdessus's views were endorsed by James Wolfensohn, the president of the World Bank, and Robert Rubin, the US Treasury Secretary, as well as Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

## Prospect of higher base rates sends sterling soaring

The pound rose and shares fell yesterday after data showing the economy remained buoyant increased the threat of higher interest rates later in the year.

Analysts took comfort from better-than-forecast personal savings figures and an unexpected resilient export sector, but they said an upward revision of second-quarter GDP figures meant the upward trend in base rates would soon resume.

The economy grew by 3.5 per cent in the second quarter, new figures from the Office of National Statistics showed yesterday, a revision from the previous estimate of 3.4 per

cent and well above the 2.25 to 2.5 per cent analysts believe is sustainable without stoking inflation.

"The upward revision to these figures confirms that activity in the second quarter was very strong," HSBC economist Dharshini David said. "Bearing in mind the strength of other recent indicators, we still see base rates as not having reached their peak yet."

Interest rates have increased on four occasions since the election but expectations in the money markets are for a further quarter-point rise to 7.25 per cent. Many economists

believe rates will rise to 8 per cent before peaking.

The currency markets saw the data as a sign of tighter monetary policy to come and pushed the pound 2 pence higher to DM2.89 in expectation of a better return on sterling. The prospect of higher rates knocked shares, however, with the FTSE 100 index of leading shares closing 48.2 points lower at 5027.5.

There were further concerns the full impact of building society windfall payments had not yet shown through in the official statistics. Some spending - on holidays and R

registrations cars - might not show up until later in the year.

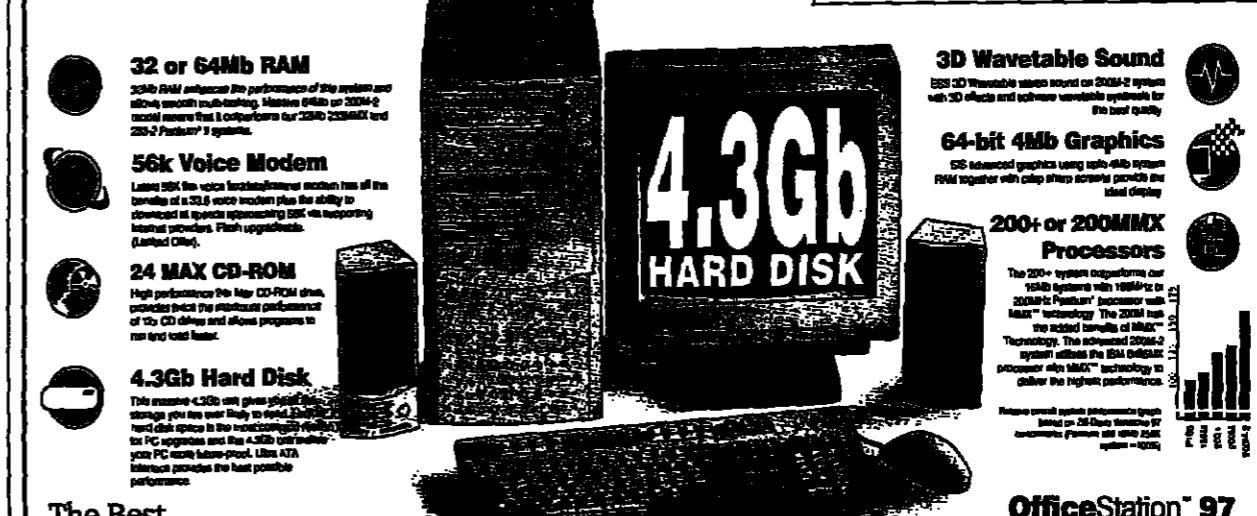
However, economists took heart from a rise in the personal savings ratio from 10.4 per cent of income to 11.7 per cent. During the late 1980s boom the same ratio was only half as much.

Another surprise was the relatively insignificant impact on exporting companies of the high pound. Although Britain's trade surplus declined from £1.35bn to £888m, the three month period was the third in a row that trade balance had been in the black.

-Tom Stevenson

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## Southern to move into magazines

As big regional newspaper companies carve up the industry between them, smaller players such as the AIM-listed Southern Newspapers are finding opportunities for growth hard to come by.

As a result, Southern has decided to diversify into magazine publishing, and is contemplating a full stock-market listing to fund its expansion plans. Cathy Newman reports.

Southern said yesterday it had "sufficient resources" to make a "sizeable start" in magazine publishing, both by acquiring existing titles and starting up new ones. James Sexton, chief executive, said the company was taking a "quiet look" at magazines, as the current round of ownership changes in the regional press "can't go on indefinitely".

Despite laying plans to expand into both consumer and business magazines, Mr Sexton said he was still looking at

regional newspapers, but at the right price. He said Southern, the tenth-largest regional newspaper publisher, would like to be one of six big players to control the industry in years to come, and was considering moving to the full market to fund substantial acquisitions. There are currently around 20 key regional publishers in the UK.

He reiterated his statement a year ago that the group was prepared to spend £100m to expand its publishing operations, and, despite not launching a rights issue "since the 1950s", said: "There's no reason why we shouldn't go for a rights issue if we found the right target."

Southern spent £31.5m buying United Provincial Newspapers' Welsh division last November, and the company said it would "look at anything" if United put the rest of its regional newspapers up for sale.

However, Mr Sexton admitted Southern would find it hard to challenge market leaders such as Trinity International Holdings and Newsquest Media Group, which announced last week it was to float.

Southern reported a 25 per cent drop in pre-tax profits to £14.1m for the year to the end of June, after £3.4m re-organisation and redundancy costs. Profits in the same period the previous year had been artificially boosted by a property disposal.



James Sexton £100m war chest

Mr Sexton said the "difficult period" of streamlining Southern's publishing regions, which led to 175 redundancies, was now virtually over, although around 25 further job losses were expected.

Underlying advertising revenue increased by 9.1 per cent across the group, although the company did experience a dip in the week of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Although there was no evidence of a downturn in advertising revenue, the company said it would be "foolish" to expect the present boom to continue throughout next year.

Circulation across the group fell 1.5 per cent, but increases in cover prices pushed revenue up 1.9 per cent.

Evening titles performed poorly, although Mr Sexton said there were some signs that the circulation decline in the evening market was coming to a halt.

Southern is looking at various promotional activities to boost circulations. One option is to reward loyalty by offering discounts to people who buy the group's papers consistently throughout the week.

Shares in Southern jumped 20.5p to 749p.

### PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Airways tickets to any destination in the US was opened by Richard Branson at a deliberately insulting price of £1. What a wag.

There followed an awkward couple of minutes when Mr Branson's even more generous donation, free travel anywhere in the world courtesy of Virgin, looked as if it wouldn't even make the BA reserve. Relief all round as the tickets were finally knocked out for £8,000.

The entertainment continued as the auctioneer, Chris Tarrant, Capital Radio's star DJ, found himself adjudicating over a bidding war between his own wife and Mr Branson for a morning with Capital Radio's Flying Eye. Since Mr Tarrant's wife was sitting in Mr Branson's lap at the time, it was not easy to see who had actually won this coveted prize. It is only possible to speculate on why either of them wanted this special treat. Was it mere bravado on Mr Branson's part or do I sense a merger coming on?

The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has appointed a new fundraiser, Jeremy Bayliss, a chartered surveyor and senior partner of Gerald Eve. Mr Bayliss has been a surveyor for 37 years and now becomes chief executive of Kew's Foundation, in order to raise funds for one of the world's greatest

botanic gardens. Kew's director, Sir Gilean Prance, paid tribute to the "fantastic job" done by the previous chief executive, Giles Coode-Adams. The latter had raised more than £16.5m for Kew. "He has exceeded my wildest dreams," Sir Gilean tells me.

Martin Sorrell has finally merged the media buying operations of WPP's UK advertising subsidiaries, J Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mather. As with all mergers, however amicable, there are winners and losers. And it looks like JWT's Dominic Proctor has come out on top, with the title of chief operating officer of MindShare (the new merged body) and chairman of MindShare UK.

OM&M's Mandy Pooler, one of the most powerful women in advertising and with a reputation for tough talking, becomes merely managing director of MindShare UK.

As far as I understand it, "media buying" means buying advertising space. According to MindShare itself, the newly merged operation will "leverage its size to buy share of voice in the most cost-effective way possible". So now you know.

Cortecs, the Isleworth, Middlesex-based drug company, has poached Dr Phil Gould from Glaxo Wellcome UK to be its new director of research and development. Dr Michael Flynn, president and chief operating officer at Cortecs, is delighted to have hooked such a big fish. Dr Gould is Glaxo's head of new product introduction and product technology, overseeing 340 technical staff. The newcomer "will take on responsibility for managing and leading all our R&D projects" at Cortecs, says Dr Flynn. This will consist mostly of developing new "pharmaceutical delivery systems", in other words pills to cure osteoporosis and the like.

### Bombardier project creates 300 jobs at Shorts

Shorts, the Belfast-based aerospace company, is investing £108.4m in a project which will create over 300 jobs and safeguard 671 more. Shorts is to design and make airframe components for two new aircraft being built by its Canadian parent company, Bombardier. The programmes will more than replace the hundreds of jobs lost at Shorts with the collapse of Dutch plane maker Fokker last year. Ulster Secretary Mo Mowlam announced the investment during a visit to Shorts before heading to the talks at Stormont. Shorts has been given assistance of £19.5m by the Government's Industrial Development Board.

### SCS to sell subscriber bases

Securicor plans to sell the subscriber bases of Securicor Cellular Services (SCS) to Cellnet for £38m. The group will take a £17m exceptional charge in its full-year results following the disposal. SCS said the sale of its consumer and small business subscribers, estimated to number 254,000 at completion, to Cellnet, in no way affects Securicor's 40 per cent holding in Cellnet. Securicor also intends to conclude talks for the sale of its corporate subscribers to Martin Dawes Telecommunications for £8m cash.

### Siebe to buy Eaton division

Siebe, the engineering group, has agreed to buy the Appliance Control Operations of Eaton Corporation for £193m cash. Siebe will pay for the acquisition from existing resources. The company has also authorised the sale of certain companies, "which no longer fit the long-term strategy of building world-leading businesses at each of Siebe's three divisions". The companies include its Tcalemit Garage Equipment operations and Wells Electronics.

### Arcadian reveals approach

Arcadian International, the hotels company, has received an approach from a third party which may or may not lead to an offer being made for the whole of the issued ordinary share capital of the company. "Discussions are at a preliminary stage and a further announcement will be made in due course," Arcadian said. The shares rose from 50.5p to 65.5p, valuing the company at almost 297m.

### Woodchester takeover

Woodchester Investments, the Irish financial services group, has agreed to be taken over by GE Capital for £15.9m. This is the biggest takeover in the history of the Irish stock exchange. Woodchester agreed the terms of a recommended cash offer which would value each share at £12.63p. Crédit Lyonnais holds a 54 per cent stake in Woodchester and has agreed to accept GE's offer, conditional on the agreement of the French government. The price represents a multiple of 17 times Woodchester's 1996 earnings per share and a multiple of 2.8 times its shareholders' funds at 31 December, 1996. Its main businesses are motor and equipment leasing and instalment credit.

### Simon moves sector

Simon Group, the port services and engineering group, unveiled pre-tax profits up 16 per cent to £5.8m for the six months to 30 June and said it had "substantially completed" its disposal programme. It paid no dividend. It has been reclassified from the Engineering sector to the Support Services sector. Earnings per share for the ongoing business rose 53 per cent to 2.3p (1.5p) while debt fell to £48.5m after the repayment of US\$90m.

### BSM drives strategy towards schools expansion in Europe

BSM, Britain's biggest motor school, is looking to change gear with a shift into information technology training in Britain and expansion of its driving schools business outside the UK.

The group, which saw its profits go into reverse at the half year after the introduction of the new written driving test, sharply reduced numbers taking the practical test, wants to broaden its business.

Richard Glover, BSM's chief executive, said the move into general IT training was not imminent, but made long-term sense: "We already train our driving instructors and complete driving manuals, so we have experience of training. IT training is a fast growing area and would reduce our dependence on a narrow market."

BSM is also considering opening driving schools on the

continent, probably in France initially where it has knowledge of the market from its relationship with Paros, the French aircraft simulator group. BSM plans to site simulators, replicas of Vauxhall Corsas, in eight UK cities by October to encourage young learner drivers to start lessons early. "The response so far has been stunning. Simulators help drivers overcome the fear factor. We think they will be a unique selling point for us," Mr Glover said.

BSM said that the introduction of the written driving test had led to a 50 per cent fall in the number of drivers applying for the practical exam. As a result, half-year profits to June slumped from £2.9m to £1.5m, in line with the profits warning in April.

BSM held its half-year dividend at 2.53p.

—Sameena Ahmad

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### THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

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#### Tarmac faces uphill task

Zacutex, the pancreatitis treatment, in Europe not due until next year, investors have little else to guide them.

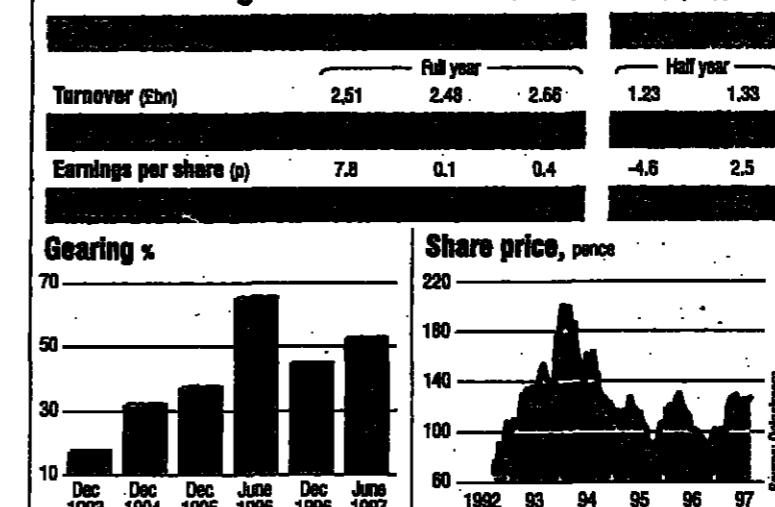
It is encouraging that British Biotech is expanding its cancer trials so extensively. Two new breast cancer trials of almost 700 patients have started this year, both largely funded by external bodies, adding to continuing trials in six cancer types.

Crucially, the group is also starting studies combining marimastat with existing chemotherapy drugs.

This blitz of cancer trials and drug combinations makes sense. To capitalise on the huge cancer market worldwide, marimastat needs to be the drug of first choice for most cancers. Moreover, if the theory behind marimastat is correct, combination therapy should prove to be the best treatment, with chemotherapy shrinking the tumour and marimastat in effect sealing it, preventing the spread of secondary tumours. While the City waits for proof, British Biotech's £173m cash pile should see it through to commercialisation.

Meanwhile, the group is keeping costs in check. First-quarter losses were £1m higher at £9m but on target. Valuation remains the great unknown. Lehman Brothers reckons the shares are fair value at 155p, assuming marimastat,

#### Tarmac: At a glance



early as 1999, could generate another £30m of profits.

But Mr Simms still has an uphill task. Roads still represent 15 per cent of Tarmac's turnover, while Mr Simms' pro-privatising zeal for the private finance initiative and facilities management work has still to make much of an impact. The group's professional services operation, which includes facilities management, may break into profit this year, boosted by the £100m Gravesend and Dartford hospital PFI project launched yesterday.

Assuming profits of £12.7m in the full year, the shares up 3p to 128.5p, stand on a forward p/e of 14. With a dividend still to be covered by earnings, they are a hold.

half the value, has a 55 per cent probability of reaching market. Hold for now.

#### Profits rise 58% at PizzaExpress

If dough rises like the share price of PizzaExpress, the restaurant chain would be in serious trouble. The group has seen its market value multiply 10-fold to £500m in the space of four years, with results for the year to June adding another £25m yesterday.

Turnover rose by 60 per cent, of which only 9 per cent came from like-for-like sales. The rest of the growth came from 32 new restaurants during the year and 32 franchises bought in last October. As a result, profits rose by 58 per cent to £16.2m, including £660,000 from disposals.

There are now 150 outlets in the UK and the City has raised the potential ceiling from 200 to as much as 300. Domestic saturation could be only four to five years away, but the first international franchise has opened in Cyprus and moves are afoot to take the concept to the US, Italy, Spain, France, the Middle and Far East.

Greig Middleton is forecasting underlying profits of £22.23m for the current year putting the shares at 759p, up 31.5p, on a forward multiple of 30 times forecast earnings, which compares with an asset value of only 17p. If growth hits a flat spot the shares could prove indigestible to investors with a delicate constitution. High enough.

#### Cancer trials boost Biotech

British Biotech's assurance yesterday that clinical trials of marimastat, its potential blockbuster cancer drug, are on track was enough to satisfy a market shell-shocked by recent calamities in the biotech sector.

The group's share price, which has dipped from a high of 270p this year, added 3.5p to close at 168p on encouraging first-quarter results.

As Biocomp and Celtech have clearly shown, management's confidence about a product is no guarantee of success.

However, with the first results from marimastat phase III trials not due until the first half of 1999 and filing of

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#### Latchways plc

(Incorporated and Registered in England and Wales no. 1189060)

Placing of 4,456,168 Ordinary Shares of 5p each

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Share Capital following the Placing

Amount	Number	Amount	Number	
£641,080.15	12,821,603	Ordinary Shares of 5p each	£501,092.30	10,021,346

Latchways plc designs and sells a range of engineered fall arrest safety equipment offering continuous protection to individuals working at height. Latchways plc sells to installers in twenty countries throughout the world including the United States, Japan and many European countries.

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24 September 1997







GOLF: COUNTDOWN TO THE RYDER CUP



Tiger Woods drives at the 11th at Valderrama yesterday, watched by his American team-mates (left to right) Lee Janzen, Scott Hoch and Mark O'Meara

Photograph: David Ashdown

## Danger: Tigertime zone straight ahead

In Tiger Woods the American team possesses the hottest property in golf. Woods is making his debut in the Ryder Cup, but, as his amateur career showed, the head-to-head version of the game perfectly suits his aggressive style and flair for the dramatic.

Few people in sport, let alone golf, have the ability to make something out of nothing quite like Seve Ballesteros. Five major titles, five World Match Play crowns and a distinguished Ryder Cup career stand to that. Among jewels was his 1983 encounter with Arnold Palmer at Wentworth. One down and in trouble at the last, Ballesteros pitched in from 50 yards off the green to force a play-off, which, naturally, he won.

As non-playing captain, Ballesteros will not be able to conjure such magic at Valderrama this week. But in Tiger Woods, the American team have someone who certainly can.

His aggressive style can be even more devastating in matchplay than usual, with an errant shot only costing one hole rather than the double, triple and quadruple bogeys that have smirched his scorecards in the majors since his stunning US Masters victory. So much has happened to golf, as well as to the 21-year-old phenomenon in the last year, that it hardly seems pos-

sible that on 25 August, 1996, Woods was still an amateur golfer.

That was the day Woods won his third US Amateur Championship. A few hours later, guided as ever by his father Earl, Woods signed his first contracts with Mark McCormack's International Management Group and then with Nike; the latter for the little matter of \$40m (£25m).

Woods, two years into a degree at Stanford University, had faced intense scrutiny about his future plans, but everything was on hold pending an attempt to become the first player to win three US Amateurs in a row at Pumpkin Ridge, near Portland, Oregon. Phil Knight, the CEO of Nike whose headquarters are only 20 minutes away, was a conspicuous member of Woods' gallery all week.

When he became, at 18, the youngest winner of the US Amateur in history, Woods was six down to Trip Kuehne after 13 holes in the final. Kuehne had made鸟ies at seven of those holes on the Sawgrass course which annually stages The Players' Championship, but could not keep up his superb golf.

BY ANDY FARRELL

After lunch, Woods won three holes in a row to be one down with seven to play, but at the 32nd and 33rd he drove into the trees and scrambled brilliantly for two halves in par. At the 34th, he got up and down from 60 yards for a birdie four to draw level and, at the next, Sawgrass's treacherous par-three to an island green, his tee shot spun back off the back fringe to 14 feet. Naturally, he holed the putt and a par at the last confirmed the best comeback in the history of the event.

A year later, at Newport, Rhode Island, Woods was down three holes ear-

ly on against Buddy Marucci, but holed a curling 20-footer to go two up at the 33rd. He needed the cushion for he lost the next, but, at the last, Woods hit his eight-iron directly over the flag. The ball landed 15 feet past the hole and spun back stiff. Bye, bye, Buddy.

So to Pumpkin Ridge. Woods hit only

three fairways and four greens on the front nine against Scott. His estimated morning round was a 76. Woods missed the green at the first hole of the afternoon, but that was the last he missed. After birdies at the 21st and 22nd, he won the 24th and the 27th to get back to one down. But Scott chipped in to win the next and, after a roller-coaster ride, went back to two up at the 32nd.

At the 34th, Woods had a six-foot putt for a birdie, but Scott had to remind him to replace his marker after Woods had moved it away from his opponent's line. Without Scott's act of generosity, Woods would have been penalised the hole and lost the match. Of course, Woods holed the putt to go one down.

Now the atmosphere was wild, and it got even more so when Woods holed a 30-foot downhill birdie putt at the next. The fist-pumping celebration that followed has become his trademark. The last hole of regulation and the first of the play-off were halved, before a par at the 38th, Scott having lipped out, gave Woods victory. Scott had his hand in congratulation, but Woods was buried in embraces by his mother, father and entourage.

By winning 20 and losing only two of his matches in five US Amateurs, Woods' record is the best of all time, beating even Bobby Jones (W43, L8) and Jack Nicklaus (W24, L5). In all USGA matchplay events, Woods lost only three times.

In his only experience of team matchplay events, at the 1995 Walker Cup which America lost at Royal Portrush, Woods showed that hitting the ball 100 yards past his opponent could not guarantee victory as he lost to Gary Wolstenholme on the first day. Overall, his record for the week was a less than inspired won two, lost two.

"That was a little different level to which he will experience now," Mark O'Meara said of Woods' amateur success. "His intimidation factor was quite a bit higher in amateur golf than it is in professional golf." Woods' game has developed too, though, and his flair for the dramatic will prove dangerous as he makes his Ryder Cup debut. "He loves the challenge, he's young, he's hungry and he is a competitor," added O'Meara.

"I have always preferred matchplay over medal play," Woods said after his first official practice round as a Ryder Cup player yesterday. "It's one-on-one and you don't get the chance to do that very often."

"There is more emotion involved. You can ride the wave of momentum, or get stomped on. I think it is great. It takes more courage to play matchplay than strokeplay. In strokeplay it is all down to the last nine holes on Sunday. In matchplay, it starts on the first tee."

A sporting event  
for those who are  
able to afford it

Only people who have been living in a cave without news delivery can have failed to notice the attention being paid presently to a golf match in southern Spain between millionaires representing the United States and Europe.

If the Ryder Cup does not command a great deal of interest outside the white-collar, middle class golfing community in our former transatlantic colony, it has grown into a sports event beyond anything that could have been imagined by the Hertfordshire seed merchant who put the idea forward.

We are not only talking here about an explosion of commercial activity but further proof that the best travelled sports fans are British. Apart from those who trek regularly across Europe with their football teams, there is never a shortage of support in the furthest flung cricket and rugby locations. So many British racegoers turn up annually for the Arc de Triomphe at Longchamp that Parisians are now inclined to give it a miss. Also, it doesn't require the presence of one of our own in the ring for British fight fans to show up for championship contests in Las Vegas and Atlantic City.

Wandering around Valderrama's lush contours, the language you are most likely to hear is English. A conservative estimate is that Spaniards will be outnumbered by 5-1 in the audience of 25,000. In view of the fact that there are only 110,000 registered Spanish golfers in a population of around 44m and that golf here centres on tourism, this is hardly surprising. Nevertheless, and allowing for the number of British expatriates resident in the area, it emphasises what the Ryder Cup has become for people who can afford it.

Over the past 25 years it has grown and grown. In 1975, on the way to watch Muhammad Ali take on Joe Frazier in Manila, I stopped off to take in the Ryder Cup (before the European format was adopted) at Laurel Valley near Pittsburgh.

The first day there I was driven to the course by an avid golfer who had taken a week's leave from schoolteaching to assist with the arrangements. "What is this Ryder Cup?" he asked. Expressing a view still shared by the majority of his compatriots, he added "I don't think there can be much in all this if there isn't any money at stake."

It was the Ryder Cup in which Brian Barnes twice defeated Jack Nicklaus (otherwise it was a familiar story, America defeating Great Britain and Ireland by 21-11) but even that did not greatly excite American hacks. Insularity comes into this but Pittsburgh's leading newspaper at the time, *The Post Gazette*, covered the match in 12 paragraphs.

As recently as 1987, when Tony Jacklin's team of Europeans defeated the US at Muirfield Village, the reaction of most Americans was "What is the Ryder Cup and why did we lose it?" The *New York Times*' interest was confined to a reference in the sports round-up just above results in cycling and yachting.

In 1985 reporters were not present in enough numbers to constitute an unlawful assembly. In Valderrama more than 500 media representatives work in a tent large to accommodate a medium-sized airliner.

The day after Europe's remarkable victory at Oak Hill two years ago I took a train from Rochester to Albany in the company of passengers who had travelled overnight from Chicago. On being informed of the result, they expressed little if any interest. A subsequent telephone call to Rochester confirmed that it was still awash with the celebrations of British supporters. Fly the flag and you are sure to find them. If it's not the Army Army, it's the monied class that has descended in droves on Valderrama.

Photograph: David Ashdown

KEN JONES  
AT THE  
RYDER CUP



KEN JONES  
AT THE  
RYDER CUP

COMPLETE FIRST-CLASS AVERAGES FOR THE 1997 CRICKET SEASON

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Qualifications: Six innings											
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